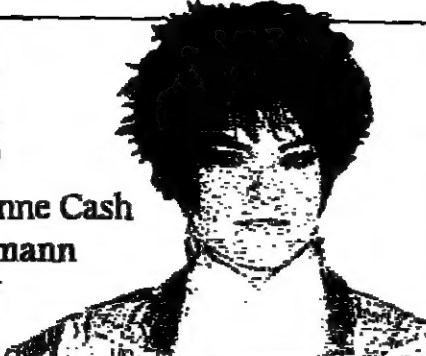


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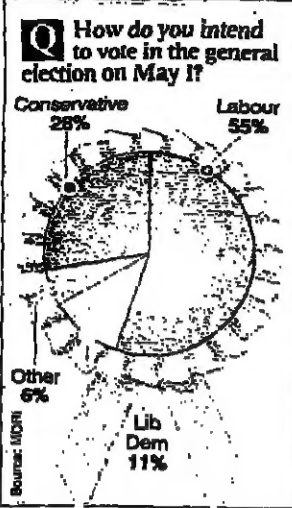
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BEST FOR JOBS

	80K
Executive	80K
Director	65K
Consultant	35K
Graduate	15K

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Sleaze takes its toll on Tories as Labour stretches lead

By PETER RIDDELL

THE Tories have lost further public support in the sleaze-dominated first fortnight of the election campaign. The latest MORI poll for *The Times* confirms Labour's commanding lead on the day it launches its manifesto.

The poll, undertaken on Tuesday, underlines Tory hopes that the party might have started to narrow the huge Labour lead. Labour now stands at 55 per cent, up from 50 per cent in the last poll a week ago, with the Tories on 28 per cent, down a point since before Easter. The

Liberal Democrats have lost their early campaign gain and fallen three points to 11 per cent, while support for the Referendum Party has dipped. It was put at 3 per cent before Easter and rounded up to 2 per cent this week.

But these week-to-week fluctuations and the widening in the Labour lead from 21 to 27 points matter less than the absence of any sign of a Tory recovery. The party's rating is the lowest since last October. Ahead of its manifesto launch yesterday, the party was mired in "sleaze" allegations throughout the two weeks since the

election was announced. By contrast, Labour has enjoyed a largely trouble-free campaign so far, and even its slight wobble over new rights for trade unions was overshadowed by Tory difficulties. Labour's rating is back to its high level of January.

The Liberal Democrat rating is back to its low pre-campaign levels as the party has fought to gain public and media attention and has risked being squeezed by Labour.

The MORI poll is in marked contrast to the ICM poll in *The Guardian* yesterday which suggested that Labour support was falling

and Tory support rising. The main reason for the contrast is that ICM puts Labour ten points lower and the Liberal Democrats seven points higher than MORI. Movements between Labour and the Liberal Democrats have accounted for much of the volatility in the polls in recent weeks. But there have been much smaller variations in the Tory rating, which has been two or three points either side of 30 per cent for the past 18 months.

Moreover, Labour's big lead in voting intentions is underpinned by the big advantage which Tony Blair enjoys over John Major as to who

would make the most capable Prime Minister. Labour also enjoys a more favourable image than the Tories on being moderate, having the best policies, and having the best team of leaders. This is in contrast with the 1992 election when Labour's poll lead in the campaign was contradicted by Mr Major's consistent lead over Neil Kinnock as a leader.

The Tory weakness in the polls is despite the strength of the economy and a recovery in optimism, the "feelgood" factor, to levels seen before the Conservatives' last three victories. Whereas Mr Major and the Tories were given the benefit of

the doubt over the recession five years ago, they are now not being given much thanks for the recovery and the fall in unemployment.

It is too early to translate these poll figures into precise estimates of numbers of seats, but if Labour sustains a lead even into double figures, it will be heading for a landslide victory.

MORI interviewed 1,118 adults at 84 sampling points on a face-to-face basis on April 1. Voting intention figures exclude those who say they would not vote (6 per cent), are undecided (12 per cent) or who refused to say (4 per cent).

Major offers 'best place in the world'

By PHILIP WEBSTER AND JILL SHERMAN

JOHN MAJOR offered support for marriage, the family, the elderly and children yesterday when he unveiled a Conservative election manifesto dedicated to making Britain "the best place in the world to live".

He promised £1.2 billion tax concessions for married couples when either the husband or wife stays at home to look after children or dependent relatives.

And he outlined measures to guarantee standards in schools, tackle crime and clean up housing estates in a package aimed at making "haves of the have-nots, to bring wealth and welfare hand-in-hand".

The manifesto was set against the backdrop of a "booming Britain" and with the country able to look forward to opportunities undreamt of a few years ago, the next government would inherit a golden bequest, Mr Major said.

The new tax plan would allow the spouse who stayed at home to transfer their personal allowance to the one at work, giving almost two million families an extra £900 a year. But it would not apply to unmarried couples or one-parent families. Although there was no attempt to moralise in the manifesto, Mr Major said: "We are in favour of marriage and we are in favour of the family."

But Mr Major was attacked by Labour for making uncosted pledges on cuts without the faintest idea of how to pay for them. And the Prime Minister admitted that his promises were dependent on the performance of the economy. The tax allowances change would "probably" come in 1998-99.

Other keynote proposals were pledges to give thousands of careers looking after sick or elderly relatives a annual week's break, a widening of the assisted places scheme to help more children

- 6 The Prime Minister had slipped yesterday into his Zen mode of delivery — we call it his Mystic Meg voice? *Matthew Parris, page 14*
- 6 The plan to give non-working spouses a tax break has hidden stings? *Anatole Kaletsky, page 8*

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from poorer families, turning one in five schools into specialist centres of excellence and giving all schools more independence from local authorities. The manifesto also promises moves to widen share ownership and to privatise the London Underground and the parcels arm of the Post Office.

In addition, there were the previously trailed schemes to allow individuals to build up a lifetime pension "pot", a long-term scheme to help the elderly to afford nursing care without losing their life's savings and a guarantee of year-on-year increases in health service resources. Councils will be required to sell homes that have been empty for more than a year and the party promises to raise some £25 billion in private investment to spruce up housing estates.

On law and order, the manifesto returns to the tough mandatory sentences for repeat offenders that were lost in the rush to get Michael Howard's crime Bill through before Parliament was sus-

pended two weeks ago. And it promises speedier punishment for juvenile offenders, a ban on rape defendants questioning victims in court, and new measures to deal with City fraud.

Mr Major's tax proposals came under swift attack from Labour, with spokesmen pointing out that ministers had been unable to say where the £1.2 billion would come from. Mr Major made plain that it would be his top priority ahead of getting the basic rate down to 20p and abolishing capital taxes. But Kenneth Clarke was not shifting from his priorities of cutting the budget deficit before cutting taxes.

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, said that after 22 tax increases in the last Parliament, the centrepiece of Mr Major's manifesto "appears to be yet another set of costly, risky, unfair tax changes". He added: "They're at it again, flagging up uncosted promises on tax without the faintest idea of how to pay for them. Mr Major has made a commitment and he has not the slightest clue as to how it is going to be financed beyond the vague generalities."

The Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown attacked the manifesto as being a document "for the few, not the many" described its proposals as "another auction of fantasy promises, sometime, never tax cuts".

Mr Major, however, defended his 56-page document *You Can Only Be Sure with the Conservatives* as "the boldest and most far-reaching any party has published since 1979".

Using Labour's argument that it was time for change, he said: "It is time for change: time for a change to the next phase of Conservative prosperity that will give everyone — no matter who they are, where they live — more choice and more control over their lives."

MANIFESTO: THE MAIN POINTS

- A £1.2 billion plan allowing non-working parent or carer to transfer personal tax allowance to working partner.
- Standard income tax rate to be cut to 20p in five years.
- Public given right to sue unions over excessive industrial action.
- Privatisation of Parcelforce, London Underground and National Air Traffic Service.
- Basic Pension Plus scheme allowing young people to build up private pension plan.
- Long-term care insurance scheme to protect assets against nursing care costs.
- Reductions in inheritance and capital gains tax.
- Automatic life sentence for those convicted of second violent or sexual offence. Seven-year sentences for repeat burglars. Electronic tagging for offenders.
- Annual increases in health service spending.
- Extension of selection in schools. National education targets, individual school performance targets and action to tackle underperforming schools and education authorities. More specialist schools.
- Nationwide introduction of workfare-style scheme to help long-term unemployed.



Flanagan, the Conservative's Chicken Man: "It is hot inside and hard to breathe"

Chicken: the first interview

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

MUSICIAN Noel Flanagan, clad as a six-foot yellow chicken, will take centre stage today in the Tories' new offensive against Tony Blair.

Mr Flanagan, 39, has been chosen as the man to follow the Labour leader around the country to try to goad him into agreeing to appear in a televised debate with John Major.

He agreed to the part after being approached by a friend at Central Office over the weekend. His previous experience includes playing a segment of a caterpillar at primary school and the front part of a St Bernard's dog to promote a hospital radio station.

The Tories jealously guarded access to their latest campaign weapon, dreamt up after Mr Major accused the Labour leader of being "a chicken" by refusing to agree to a television debate. Spin doctors began practising their dark arts, restricting picture access to the chicken to a favoured newspaper as a "prime exclusive" in advance of today's photocall. "We must not dilute the impact of the official unveiling," a Tory official said.

Despite the secrecy, *The Times* managed to track down John Major's feathered friend after he made a private morale-boosting tour of Conservative headquarters yesterday.

Mr Flanagan said the role did present him with some ethical problems. "I slope in and out of vegetarianism. I don't believe in the exploitation of animals and object to battery chickens. I hope this one is free range. It is hot inside and hard to breathe."



"We'll all have chicken"

He was also surprised to be described by Conservative Central Office as a floating voter. "You can only be a floating voter if you vote. And I never do. I have never voted Conservative in my life. Nor do I intend to. Nor am I going to vote for Labour. I am not going to vote for any of them," he said.

Mr Flanagan could not discuss his salary, having signed a confidentiality clause with Central Office. But Equity rates of pay for similar work at holiday camps would pocket Mr Flanagan about £50 a day.

Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's press secretary, was not perturbed by the prospect of being shadowed by Mr Flanagan, who is a karate expert. He sent accreditation forms to Central Office to ensure he can attend their press conferences. Mr Campbell writes: "He will of course be entitled to ask questions but this being the Labour

Blair to unveil his 'contract with Britain'

By JILL SHERMAN AND PHILIP WEBSTER

TONY BLAIR will today unveil a personal ten-point contract with Britain, promising voters that he will not "dazzle for 100 days and then disappoint".

Launching a "bold but realistic programme" for government, the Labour leader will put at the top of his "personal bond of trust with the people" a promise to increase the share of national income spent on education and to cut the amount spent on welfare as more people get jobs. Other measures include promises to help the young employed, to build strong families and strong communities and to "clean up politics".

Mr Blair has told close colleagues that he will not deserve a second term if he fails to keep his manifesto promises. The document is an unashamed attempt to claim the one-nation mantle from the Tories.

Aides said Mr Blair had written the bulk of the document himself and there was nothing in it to which he was not personally committed. "He would be unable to face the British public if he could not achieve this in the next five years. If he failed in this he

would not expect to succeed in future," one aide said.

Mr Blair will say that the 16,000-word document is realistic and "uncompromisingly New Labour". It will reaffirm the party's commitment to a windfall tax and a pledge not to increase either the top or basic rates of income tax over the next five years. In addition it will confirm Labour's aim to introduce a 10p starting rate of tax, although no timetable will be given.

Mr Blair will emphasise that it has been a long haul to change his party and its policies in the three years since he became leader and that he is not promising a revolution but a fresh start.

"We have modernised the Labour Party. We will modernise Britain. This means knowing where we want to go, being clear-headed, telling the truth, making tough choices, insisting that all parts of the public sector live within their means, taking on vested interests, standing up to unreasonable demands from any quarter, and being prepared to give a moral lead where government has responsibilities it should not avoid."

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Mother dies on ski trip while helping injured son

By PAUL WILKINSON

A BRITISH woman died after she fell 200ft to her death on a French mountain as she tried to rescue her son, who had been seriously injured in a skiing accident.

Anne Conway, 50, was killed as she attempted to reach her 24-year-old son, who had fallen and broken his leg while skiing off-piste in the Alps near the Swiss-French border. French police said it appeared that Mrs Conway, an accomplished skier, had slipped 200ft down the side of a

ravine after her son, Andrew, had got into difficulties.

Her other son, Jonathan, 27, rang a family friend yesterday to break the news to neighbours in the Northumberland hamlet of Whittington, near Hexham, where the family had lived for the past two years.

Mrs Conway drove out to Geneva over a week ago in the family's Mercedes. She was accompanied by her sons, who enjoyed a few days' skiing on the French side of the Alps, in Châtel. The resort is only a short drive from the family's villa on the

outskirts of Geneva. The group was joined last Thursday by Mrs Conway's husband, Mike, 58, managing director of the Tyneside engineering firm Mitchell Bearings.

Although the family had only been in the North East for a short time, they were much involved in village life and both parents were committee members at Matten Golf Club, a short distance from their home.

Les Rainey, a friend of the Conways, said: "You couldn't wish to meet a nicer family. They are very much part of the community. We

were all part of a huge circle of friends who had dinner at each other's houses and socialised together. I took a call from Jonathan this morning telling me the terrible news and I have had to go and break it to everyone else. Our thoughts are all with the family at this time."

Dawn Harrison, 38, clubhouse manager at the Matten Golf Club, said: "Anne was liked by everyone. The club has been going three years and she has given me so much help to get it off the ground. She was always helping to organise social events and

so on. Jonathan even helped out behind the bar last summer when we were busy. Everyone here is very shocked. I had to break the news to members today and there were a lot of very sad people among them."

The family had moved to the North East from their home in Leigh, near Tonbridge, Kent, when Mr Conway was appointed to Michells. Linda Gazzard, his secretary, said yesterday: "We are in touch with the family and awaiting further news but obviously everyone here is very upset by what has happened."

Twin victims 'were wheeled through streets in trolley'

By STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

THE murderer of identical twin brothers wheeled their bodies through the streets in a shopping trolley and dumped them in a canal, the Old Bailey was told yesterday. Later, when a friend mentioned the men, David Dillon, 38, was alleged to have said they "had gone for a long swim".

He also told another man that he had "turned the twins over" and dropped a heavy

cartwheel onto the head of one of them. Mr Dillon, an unemployed decorator from Islington, north London, denies the murders of Christopher and Anthony Langford, 38, last spring. The court was told that the brothers had been born in the Bedfordshire area, but arrived in London by 1991 and turned into "street people".

Timothy Langdale, QC, for the prosecution, said that, for

the next five years, they lived rough in the Islington area and much of their lives involved drinking, sometimes funded by begging. He said that there was no motive for the murders.

Mr Dillon, who had a council flat, was also a heavy drinker. The twins would sometimes be out with him or in the flat.

In February last year Islington police received an anonymous note claiming that the Langfords had been killed in Mr Dillon's flat. They searched the flat but found no evidence. They did notice that some redecoration had been done.

A month later Christopher Langford's body was discovered floating in Regent's Canal. A pathologist thought he had drowned and said that fractures to the skull, ribs and a leg were caused by a fall. But the body of his brother, Anthony, then surfaced 50 yards away in the canal, wrapped in



Accused: David Dillon, who has denied the murder of the twin brothers

a blanket. He was found to have been beaten and a new post-mortem examination on Christopher concluded that he had also been beaten.

Mr Langdale told the jury that, after the discovery of the bodies, a man called Lawrence Walsh went to see police. He had met Mr Dillon in a cafe and said that he was fearful of seeing the twins because of a row over drink. Mr Dillon said he did not need to worry

about them because they had gone for a "swim". Mr Langdale told the court that it was a remark of considerable significance. It was made before the bodies surfaced.

Mr Langdale also told the jury that despite Mr Dillon's intensive efforts to clean his flat police found blood traces which could be linked to his victims.

The case continues.



Victims: Christopher, left, and Anthony Langford

Boy, 15, dies after hanging in cell

By PAUL WILKINSON AND STEWART TENDLER

AN INQUIRY has been launched after the death yesterday of a schoolboy found hanging in a police cell only hours after his arrest.

The boy, aged 15, was found unconscious on Monday afternoon, suspended by a noose made from the waist cord of his tracksuit trousers. The other end had been attached to the bars of his cell at Hartlepool police station, on Teesside. He had been arrested that day in connection with a burglary.

Custody officers cut him down and attempted resuscitation but were unable to

revive him. He was taken to Hartlepool General Hospital, where he was put on an artificial breathing machine.

It is understood that the boy's parents were told yesterday that he would not recover and agreed for the machine to be disconnected. A post-mortem examination was carried out last night and the results were expected today.

The death was referred to the Independent Police Complaints Authority. Its inquiry will centre on whether the boy was properly checked by station staff, whether he should have been seen by a doctor and whether his parents were notified that he had been arrested.

Spice Girl power adds up to £50m

By STEPHEN FARRELL

THE Spice Girls, unknown a year ago, are now multimillionaires and will sell their ten millionth album within the next week.

After the launch of the quintet's official book *Girl Power* even their record company, Virgin, admitted that it has been astonished by the scale of their success. *Spice*, the debut album, has sold 9.7 million copies worldwide — 2.5 million in Britain — and sales are running at 400,000 a week.

They have also sold 14 million singles. Industry estimates last month put their earnings at more than £2 mil-

lion each. Last night Virgin played down suggestions that they would be worth £10 million each by the end of the year, but Robert Sandall, director of press and media, said: "In the end they will almost certainly be worth more than that, but no one can predict how big they will be, nor how long it will last."

As performers, Mel B, Mel C, Geri, Victoria and Emma share 14 to 20 per cent of the dealer price for each record. They are also credited as joint songwriters — with two song-writing teams and a lyricist — earning them and their publishers 8.5 per cent of the wholesale price. Pepsi is negotiating a sponsorship.

Governor speaks up for Darrens

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

THE teacher who told a union conference that his school's Darrens, Deans and Damians were destined to fail was rebuked yesterday by his chairman of governors.

Nigel Turner, a geography teacher, said at the conference of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers on Tuesday that no amount of money or inspirational teaching would help some inner-city children to reach national norms of achievement.

Leon Unczur, chairman of the governors at William Crane Comprehensive School

in Nottingham, said: "His comments were not well thought out. They are unfair to parents, unfair to fellow staff and unfair to young people. Comments like that actually slot young people into a hole they do not belong in."

Mr Turner made his remarks while arguing for an overhaul of the school inspection system. His school, where 8 per cent of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grades A to C, is to be inspected in two weeks.

Mr Unczur said: "We are coming close to Ofsted and Mr Turner is a teacher who is under a tremendous amount of stress. I don't think he really believes what he said."

Jailers' union talks of prison ship 'mutiny'

Prison officers threatened last night to refuse to work on the prison ship *Weare* in a dispute over staffing levels and safety measures. The move came after leaders of the Prison Officers' Association visited the vessel moored in Portland harbour near Weymouth, Dorset.

A maximum of 500 low-risk prisoners are to be held on board the £35 million vessel which the Prison Service has bought to provide emergency accommodation to deal with a rapidly rising jail population. The service plans to have about 120 staff on the ship and some officers are being offered removal packages of between £28,000 and £30,000 to relocate from northern England to the Dorset coast.

Borders women can ride

Peace has broken out between the warring men and women of Hawick following a decision to lift the ban on lady riders at the town's annual summer Common Riding. The nine-month battle, which divided the Borders town, splitting families and destroying friendships, now appears to be over after a compromise was announced yesterday allowing women to take part in two of the 16 rides, although not in the main one on June 6.

Plea over nurses rejected

The brother of Yvonne Gilford, the Australian nurse murdered in Saudi Arabia, has dismissed a plea that he waive the death penalty should the British nurses accused of killing her be found guilty. Salah al-Hejailan, their defence lawyer, had asked Frank Gilford, of South Australia, to reconsider his decision to let the law take its course. Lucille McLachlan, from Dundee, and Deborah Parry, of Alton, Hampshire, face public beheading if convicted.

Old age home inquiry

Detectives will interview a woman aged 70 about the death of a 94-year-old after a dispute at a council old people's home. Mary Hall suffered a fractured hip when pushed to the floor of the television room at the Fir Trees residential home in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester. She was rushed to Tameside General Hospital but died later. Detective Superintendent Bernard Postles said yesterday: "We will have to interview staff and women involved in the incident."

Former comedian jailed

The former television comedian Gerry Thomas was jailed for nine years yesterday for firearms offences. Thomas, 65, a registered part-time firearms dealer, was caught in a police trap when he agreed to sell shotguns and pistols to a criminal, Gloucester Crown Court heard. He admitted possessing and selling firearms and ammunition illegally. The defence cited praise from the boxer John Stracey and the comedian Stan Boardman for Thomas's work for charity.

Inquest jury is warned

An inquest jury was warned that it would be breaking the law if it tried to blame the deaths of three oil rig workers at Amec's Howdon yard, on the Tyne, on negligence. But the coroner indicated he thought legal proceedings could follow. The jury returned verdicts of accidental death on Shaun McAlindon, 41, from Jarrow, Steve Welford, 38, from Whiteley Bay, and Ian Hamilton, 32, from Hebburn.

Day of crime for writer

Marnie Insip, a New York crime writer, became a real-life victim for the first time when a pickpocket tried to steal her purse on the Underground and then fled along the electrified tracks. The power was cut as a policeman gave chase; a youth was later overpowered. Miss Insip said: "I have been living in New York for many years and never been robbed or mugged... it was all quite dramatic."

Catherine Layle

Catherine Layle asks us to make clear that, notwithstanding her correctly reported comments in an article on April 1 that the thought had crossed her mind, she has no intention of attempting to reabduct her children from Germany, and has always conformed with the law.

Tories' Chicken Man tactics

Continued from page 1
Party he will not be paid to ask them. I enclose a brown envelope in which you can return the form."

□ Dressing up in a chicken suit, or some other pertinent fancy dress, has become the Nineties equivalent of heckling in American elections (Ian Brodie writes from Washington).

In 1992, George Bush was trailed at many campaign appearances by Chicken Man, or Chicken George as some called him. The purpose was to attract widespread media attention and to ruffle the then President's feathers over his reluctance to debate with his rival for the White House, Bill Clinton.

Organising someone to dress up as the Democrats'

Chicken Man was the work of Craig Livingstone, the hefty former bar bouncer, whose reward was to become director of White House security. He resigned from that post last year after it came to light that he had improperly amassed as many as 900 FBI files, many relating to Republicans. Mr Livingstone described his work with Chicken Man as "counter-events".

The Democrats introduced a new mocking mascot for last year's election. Butt Man, dressed as a cigarette, began shadowing Bob Dole after his gaffe that tobacco was not necessarily addictive.

Democratic headquarters, claiming that Mr Dole was in the pocket of the tobacco industry, sent out instructions to local committees on how to

make the Butt Man costume. As a result, Mr Dole was harassed by assorted Butt Man mutations all across the country until the joke wore thin.

In Wisconsin, Republicans countered with Baloney Man, dressed up as a sausage and with the unsuitable message that Mr Clinton and the Democrats were talking just that, baloney. Baloney Man never took off nationally.

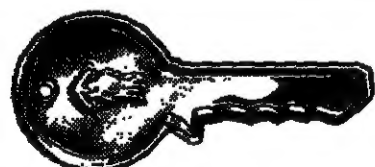
The man permutations had one insurmountable flaw. They could conceal a weapon inside the suit. For this reason, Secret Service bodyguards refused to let them approach the candidates. Indeed, the issue of security was usually given as a reason for hustling the fancy-dress intruders well out of camera range.

Payout for stroke error

A WOMAN left partly paralysed by an operation was awarded £100,000 damages by the Court of Session at Edinburgh yesterday.

Eileen Stewart, 52, of Edinburgh, suffered a stroke after an anaesthetist failed to carry out basic steps to check whether he had penetrated the correct vein. The mistake happened during an exploratory operation for a duodenal ulcer in September 1991 at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

Mrs Stewart sued Lothian Health Board alleging medical negligence. Lord Penrose ruled that the anaesthetist, a Dr Armstrong, who no longer works at the hospital, was negligent. Damages were awarded against the board.



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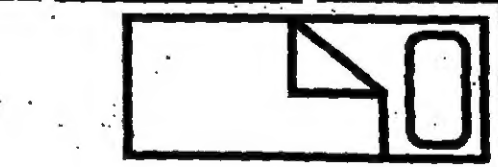
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Hope on display at the academy of broken hearts

BY DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

HOPE and defiance were on display yesterday at the Royal Academy of Arts. Would-be entrants in the Summer Show were trying again despite years of rejection.

Geniuses must suffer for their art and nothing, not even repeated exclusion from the world's largest open show, can discourage the determined artist from having another go at being discovered in their own lifetime.

On the first day for submitting works under glass, a queue formed outside Burlington House in Piccadilly, London, as about 2,000 items were delivered with the loving care of a mother taking her young child to nursery. Merre upon merre of bubble-wrap was unravelled in slow motion to prevent prized creations being damaged, although they were then to be stacked unceremoniously with hundreds of other submissions.

The artists insisted that they came in search of recognition and exposure, not fame. The show attracts about 125,000 visitors. About one in ten

applicants may make it past the selection committee drawn from the RA Council.

Yesterday was the sixth attempt for David Walter, a self-taught London artist who gave up a mathematics professorship in the Far East to create delicate abstracts using computers fed with mathematical equations. He said: "It's like the lottery. You try and try again. It's a bit of excitement every year."

Olive Griffiths, whose submission included a portrait of a reclining cat, and Louise Smith, who entered a Somerset meadow, had each tried "at least" six times. Asked why they keep returning, they answered in unison: "Hope."

They visit the show each year to view the chosen few: "When you see what was accepted, you think, how did mine get thrown out?" Ms Smith dismissed "cotton-wool trees" she saw last time. Critics described that show as ranging from real talent to mediocrity and worse.

Some people had travelled across Europe to enter. Antho-

ny Gregson drove from his home in southwest France to deliver a watercolour of a local village and Christine de Rio, a stage manager, travelled from Portugal with her Algarve landscapes.

Hope is for fourth-time lucky with a vibrant still-life, Alina Karska, from Greenford, west London, said: "If they hang my picture, I will be in seventh heaven." Ronald Salmond, from Harrow, has suffered rejection for ten years, although he had success before that: "I don't think my style's changed," he said, unwrapping his wood engraving *Boat Repairs, Topsham*. He will keep trying.

First-timers included Elizabeth Harris, an octogenarian who was too ill to deliver a sensitive still-life herself. A health visitor had been so impressed by her talent that he decided to enter it for her. He said: "She is a very old lady, with an attractive face and a young mind. This makes her feel good."

Antikka Buffrey-Powell, from Hereford, who took up painting only last October, brought along a vibrant semi-abstract image. She has devoted herself to caring for the terminally ill in hospices and decided to enter in memory of a friend who died shortly before exhibiting at the RA.

Submissions for paintings and sculpture will begin later this month. Last year a total of 11,222 works were submitted by professional and amateur artists. There was space for 1,332.

Some of this year's entrants had a slightly downcast look, almost as if they knew in their hearts that they would be collecting their works from a back office long before the Summer Show opens on June 1.

But even that would put them in good company. Since the annual show began in 1769, the names of the rejected artists include many who managed to overcome the disappointment.

Some, like Stanley Spencer and John Constable, managed to do rather well.



A photograph of Eric Clapton beside one of the two Bridget Riley paintings he is selling. The sale of 50 works next month could fetch £500,000

Eric Clapton to sell cream of his modern art collection

BY DALYA ALBERGE

ERIC CLAPTON, the rock guitarist, is selling 50 of the works of art that have decorated his London home for the past five years. A collection that ranges from a drawing by Degas to an optical illusion painting by Bridget Riley is expected to fetch £500,000.

Clapton is a regular buyer in salerooms and is known to trust his eye, rather than relying on advisers or following trends. He will continue buying modern and contemporary art, but feels like a change.

Brett Gorvy, director of contemporary art at Christie's, which will sell the collection on May 29, said: "As with his music, Mr Clapton's taste is eclectic, highly personal and strongly rooted in tradition. It has been assembled by someone who has not been affected by the vagaries of fashion."

The paintings include a striking image by Serge Poliakoff, a leading French abstract painter of the 1950s, which is estimated to fetch £15,000. A 1974 abstract by Bridget Riley, a leading figure of the Optical Art

movement, carries an estimate of £40,000. The modern Italian painter Sandro Chia, a member of the *transavanguardia* movement that reinterpreted epic history painting, is also represented.

Clapton, who battled against drink and drugs in the 1970s, bought his home in Chelsea last year for just under £1 million. He refused to comment on the sale yesterday because he did not want to be disturbed in his studio, where he is recording an album to be released later this year. Last September he cancelled performances at the Albert Hall because he was reportedly "having difficulties" recording it.

Pop stars have proved to be some of the most active collectors of art and antiques. Mick Jagger is known to have 19th-century works in a collection said to be worth up to £30 million and David Bowie's wide range of passions includes a collection of British art. The singer Bryan Ferry, a regular at art exhibitions, collects 20th-century British art. Paul McCartney owns Surrealist works

and Dave Stewart collects Dali, £40,000. The modern Italian painter Sandro Chia, a member of the *transavanguardia* movement that reinterpreted epic history painting, is also represented.

The painter Frida Kahlo, second wife of the Mexican Diego Rivera, is a particular favourite. Madonna once said that if someone did not like Kahlo's painting, "then I know they can't be my friend."

Elton John once had a voracious appetite for Art Deco and Art Nouveau, but he sold his collection at Sotheby's in 1988, part of a £4.8 million sale that had a huge influence on the market. Boxes of bizarre spectacles competed with avant-garde furniture. He is said to have started again immediately in different areas: Russian art became a new-found love.

Art Nouveau and Art Deco seem to have a particularly draw for several collectors who made their names as entertainers, among them the actress Joan Collins and pop star Rod



Sandro Chia's *Meditation*, which is also to be sold

Stewart. One observer said that what epitomised those forms was stylishness. "In the entertainment business, image and stylishness have a value." Clapton was banned from driving for 14 days by magistrates at Guildford, Surrey, yesterday after he admitted speeding. Kay Bacci, for the prosecution, said that police caught him driving his N-registered black Mercedes at an average speed of 101mph on the A3 Ripley bypass on February 18. Clapton, who had two previous speeding offences, was fined £300 and his licence was endorsed.



Many call, but few are chosen: David Walter among hopefuls arriving at the Royal Academy yesterday

Charity to close after founder milked its funds

BY EMMA WILKINS

A CHARITY for the homeless is being wound up after its founder and two other women milked its funds. All three were given suspended prison sentences yesterday after a court was told that the money went on foreign holidays and beauty treatments.

The Dove Word Ministry, a registered Christian charity in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, was originally supported by the millionaire philanthropist John Paul Getty and the Guinness Trust. John Mortimer, the playwright and barrister who lives near by, had been a patron.

The founder, Kim Gibson, 50, a former cabaret singer, her daughter, Faith Light, and a voluntary worker, Julie Phillips, were convicted of conspiracy to steal. Aylesbury Crown Court was told that Mrs Gibson used money raised from donations to buy a Range Rover, two holidays to EuroDisney and a horse box.

Judge John Slack decided to suspend Mrs Gibson's 18-month sentence because of her previous good work for the charity. Her daughter was given a nine-month suspended sentence and Ms Phillips was given a year suspended.

The judge said: "No one can doubt that the Dove Word Ministry started with the best of intentions and much hard work and benefited the unfortunate - the alcoholics,

drug users and homeless - in High Wycombe and the surrounding area."

At its height, Dove Word had three hostels and a day-care centre in High Wycombe. Police were alerted to concerns about its finances by the Rev Paul Nicholson, who was chairman. Yesterday he said it was now being wound up.

Mrs Gibson, a divorcee, had been dedicated to the charity in its early years, when she dispensed soup to the homeless from the back of an old bus. Mr Nicholson said: "She was one of the few people with the courage to go into the squats to help people."

Police said that it would never be known how much money was taken, but that it could have been about £20,000.



Kim Gibson: was given a suspended sentence

Mother tells how solvent abuse led to actor's suicide

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A MOTHER described yesterday how solvent abuse drove a former star of the musical *Oliver!* to kill himself. Kuldeep Visaria said she had watched addiction to solvents take hold of her son Ravi, 13, over the space of four weeks and turn him from a bright and communicative child into someone the family barely recognised.

Ravi was found hanging near his home in Kettering, Northamptonshire, on Saturday. His mother said yesterday: "He was a wonderful boy, so bright and so intelligent. He was a brilliant actor. He was very religious too. He used to meditate and read religious books. We were such a close family."

"Three to four weeks ago, he changed completely. He was a different person. We didn't know him at all. He would come home late at night, up to 2.30 in the morning. His hands were dirty and his eyes were glazed."

"We couldn't talk to him. We found out from school that he had sniffed lighter fluid with a few of his friends before Christmas."

"We asked him if he had been doing it again. He told us not to be silly and said: 'I'm not stupid.'"

"Then we started finding lighters in his pockets. He said he bought them with his dinner money. We cleared all the solvents out of the house,

but it didn't stop. We just couldn't get through to him. He didn't want to part of the family any more."

"He was such a perfect boy. That's what makes it so awful. We just can't understand it. He had so much to live for."

Ravi, a child model, beat off competition from hundreds of other young hopefuls to win a place in the 21-strong child cast of *Oliver!* at the London Palladium, where he played a workhouse boy, doing four shows a week during a ten-week run in 1995.

Along with his older sister, Ruby, he went to a stage school in Northampton once a week before moving to the Sylvia Young Theatre School in London. He studied full time at the Montagu School in Kettering.

Sylvia Young, whose former students include the Spice Girl Emma Bunton, the television presenter Dani Behr and the actor Nick Berry, said yesterday: "This is a great shock. He was a very talented and intelligent youngster. I would just like to extend our sympathy to the family."

A spokesman for Northamptonshire Police said: "There are no suspicious circumstances. A report is being prepared for the coroner. An inquest has been opened and adjourned and a full hearing will be held at a later date."

Batman kills all known germ ads - dead

BY ROBIN YOUNG

HOLY Germ Warfare! Batman has foiled a £2 million plot by the universal destroyer Domestos.

The brand's managers thought their product had a lot in common with Batman: both are committed to cleansing the world of insidious nasties. They hoped to use clips from the forthcoming Hollywood blockbuster *Batman and Robin* to make their point in a series of advertisements for British television.

However, George Clooney, the most recent in a long line of actors chosen to represent the caped crusader, does not

want to be associated with a lavatory cleaner. The clean-cut heart-throb, who also stars in the clinically correct hospital drama *ER*, reckoned that his image would suffer if he were associated with sanitary disinfectant, even one that is Britain's biggest household cleaning brand, so a £2 million television advertising campaign was dead in the water. Mr Clooney, who took over the Batman role from Val Kilmer, who in turn succeeded Michael Keaton, has the final say on advertising tie-ins.

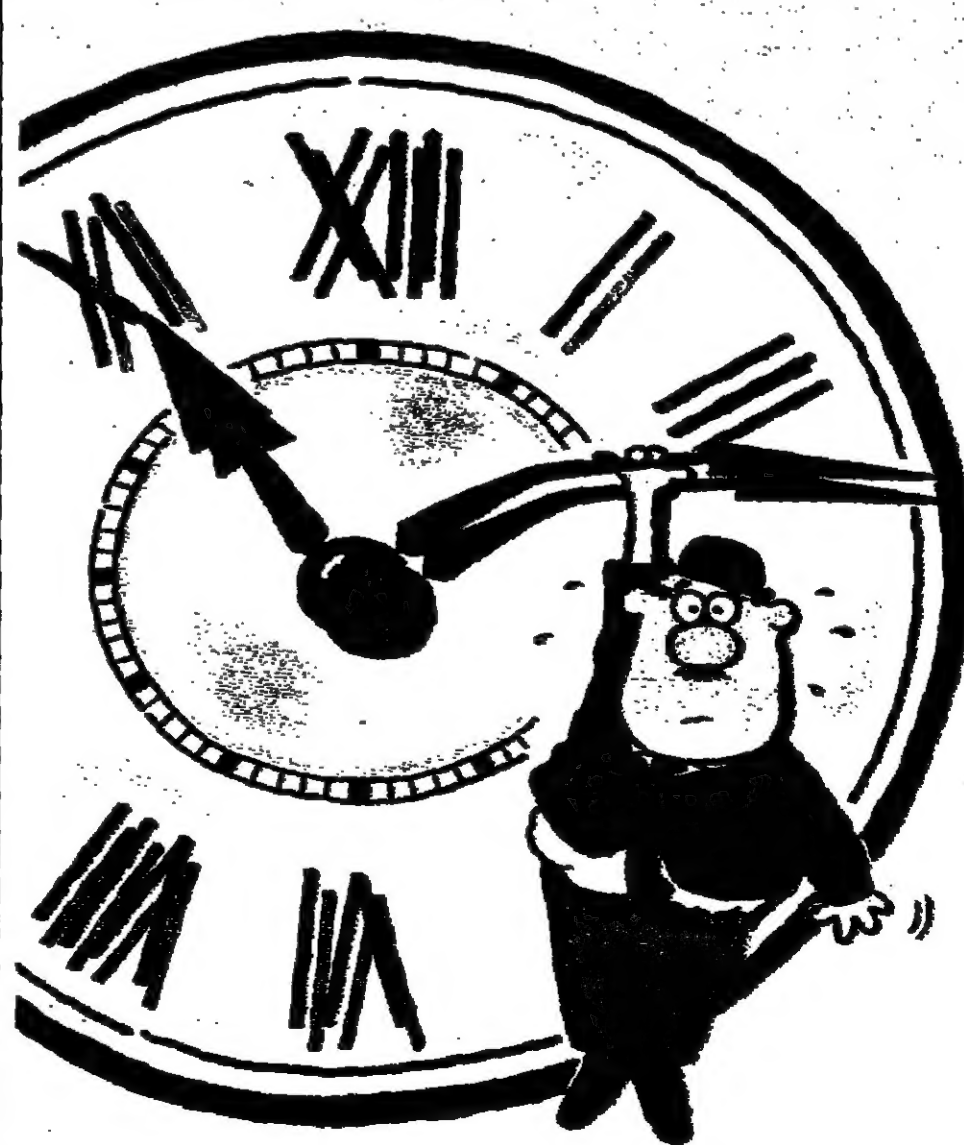
Warner Brothers, the film's maker, was not opposed to the advertisements, which would have been screened soon

after the film's release in Britain at the end of June.

Simon Thong, Domestos's brand manager, said yesterday: "This was a brilliant idea that made sense. Batman and Domestos are both strong, non-compromising and awesome to the forces of evil."

The deal between Warner Brothers and Lever Brothers, owners of the Domestos brand, was being mediated by the marketing company Triangle Communications. Triangle's chairman, Kevin Twitney, said: "I do not think Warner appreciated the strength of Domestos in the United Kingdom."

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Britain trails Mexico in new health study

By IAN MURRAY

BRITAIN is among the unhealthiest places to live in western Europe and has also fallen behind Mexico, Taiwan and Israel, according to a new analysis of 27 countries.

The claim is made despite the fact that people born in Britain today are expected to live about eight years longer than those born in 1950. The new study uses 12 indicators of public health to judge each nation's physical well-being,

rather than relying solely upon standard estimates of life expectancy.

The Economist Intelligence Unit used figures published by international organisations to examine how nations performed in meeting a series of crucial health factors. These included immunisation rates, maternal mortality, HIV, infant mortality, and rates of cancer, heart disease and respiratory disease per head of population, as well as life expectancy. On the resulting

league table of 27 nations, Sweden is the healthiest place in the world and has the best medical practice.

Israel is the second best place to avoid being ill. South Africa is the least healthy place, with India, Brazil and Russia in the places just above it.

Alexandra Wyke, editor of *Healthcare International*, a new publication covering medical care, said: "The idea was to get away from the life expectancy figure in order to

give a truer picture. Under the old system, the figure really only showed the level of care which existed in the past.

"This will give a true snapshot of the level of care at present."

The use of the new indices, she said, was to disentangle the value of medical practice and technology from other factors that influence health.

"The conclusion must be that the amount spent on healthcare and the quality of doctors and hospitals have little to do with the quality of medicine."

The tables also show that healthcare in the United States appears to be at a low ebb. It is 15th in the league table, one place above Taiwan. The magazine blames this on the increasing numbers in America who no longer have any medical insurance and cannot afford to pay for medical care.

The number believed to be uninsured is expected to escalate to 45 million, roughly 16 per cent of the population, by the turn of the century.

The countries surveyed, in order of healthiest to unhealthiest, were: Sweden, Israel, The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Mexico, the United States, Taiwan, Britain, Poland, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Hungary, Argentina, Turkey, Russia, Brazil, India and South Africa.

Body and Mind, page 20

Doctors call for pregnancy tests to cut HIV in babies

By NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

BABIES in Britain are being needlessly infected with the virus that causes Aids because tests are not routinely offered to pregnant women, researchers have claimed.

If women are found to be infected by HIV, giving them the drug AZT during pregnancy can reduce the danger that they will pass the virus to their children. AZT reduces the risk of transmission from mother to baby from one in six to one in 20. In the United States and France pregnant women are routinely offered HIV tests, but this is not done in Britain.

"We have a hopeless testing

policy," Michael Levin, professor of paediatric medicine at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, told *New Scientist*. He chaired a recent meeting to discuss the issue.

Statistics show that about 100 babies a year are born to known HIV-infected mothers in Britain, but many are born to mothers who are infected but are unaware of it.

In inner-city areas the rate of HIV infection among mothers has risen sharply since 1990. Pregnant women in London are tested anonymously, to assess the spread of the infection, and it is impossible to identify the source of samples.

Sam Walters, of St Mary's, says a policy of obliging

doctors to discuss HIV-testing with pregnant women should be considered. The highest proportion of HIV-infected mothers is among black African immigrants. They are not being targeted for testing. "We don't want to be seen as picking on certain racial groups," Dr Walters said, "but they're being discriminated against by not getting the advice and treatment they need."

Scientists have developed a technique which allows a diagnosis of fetal meningitis strains within 30 minutes. Blood and urine samples are used, avoiding the need for lumbar punctures. Trials of the system have started in Britain and Ireland.



Sister Gregory preparing for evening prayers at the Bar Convent in York, which will soon be taking in paying guests

By PAUL WILKINSON

Convent to offer bed and vespers

TOURISTS in York are being offered a new experience — bed, breakfast and evening prayers.

Nuns at the Bar Convent, within the medieval city walls at Micklegate Bar, hope they can help the works of God by offering accommodation to paying guests. The 20 sisters from the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary plan to use the revenue for a conference and study centre based on the convent's library.

Visitors will be free to join the order at services in the chapel of the Grade I Geor-

gian convent. They can also request access to the 5,000 volumes in the library.

One of the nuns, Sister Gregory, 86, said: "We are thrilled to bits. We are not a closed order and we love to bring people together and meet them. It will also give us a chance to share the wonderful books, paintings and architecture we have here."

Richard Masefield, busi-

ness manager of the trust running the convent, said that opening its doors would help it to pay its way.

Visitors will stay in eight single and seven twin rooms previously used for people on retreat. They have been modernised with the help of £50,000 from the philanthropist John Paul Getty and a similar sum from the nuns' own order. Each floor has a

kitchen for self-catering visitors. The modernisation has also meant full central heating for the nuns for the first time, as well as a much-improved supply of hot water.

Bed and breakfast costs £17 per night per person; £25 buys a packed lunch and an evening meal. The full English breakfast comes from the nuns' kitchen, but other food is prepared in a café attached to the convent's former museum.

The nuns will continue with a daily routine that first began in 1686. Looking after the guests will be left to a housekeeper, estate manager and volunteers.

McGonagall takes the rap from new wave of admirers

By JOE JOSEPH

WE ALWAYS suspected rap music was awful. How awful? So awful that rap fans now think William McGonagall — the man who got away with calling himself a poet before Scotland had a Trades Description Act — is a genius.

Rap performers are queuing to record his poems. American academics hail him as the world's first rapper. After a century of notoriety for giving verse a bad name, McGonagall is now being listed as Snoop Doggy Doggerel.

Seamus Cooney, a professor at Western Michigan University who has studied bad poets throughout the world, concludes that McGonagall is the best of the worst. Professor Cooney has particular praise for his "calypso-like disregard for rhythm".

At Chicago's North Park University, the English faculty thinks "McGonagall's appalling abuse of metre makes his poems quite suitable as rap lyrics. Do not be deceived by a merely casual or cursory examination of his poems. They are far, far worse than you can imagine." Santaphobia Inc, an American recording company, has made many Scottish jaws drop by releasing "The William McGonagall Rapping Masterclass".

Unable to contain their adoration, McGonagall's new admirers have taken to the Internet. McGonagall net sites have sprung up in Russia.

Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silvery Tay!
Alas, I am very sorry to say
That ninety lives have been
taken away
On the last Sabbath day of
1879
Which will be remembered
for a very long time.

The Tay Bridge Disaster

Japan, Romania, Canada and the United States, all devoted to the poet.

The only people not flabbergasted by his sudden popularity are members of the William Topaz McGonagall Appreciation Society, based in a Dundee pub near where the poet lived. Alex Gouick, the society's chairman, said: "I had never considered him as a rap artist before. But if people can see that in his work, it proves that he has a lot more going for him than people thought."

McGonagall, a weaver and amateur Shakespearean actor, suddenly caught poetry the way other people catch measles, recalling in his memoirs that "The most startling incident in my life was the time I discovered myself to be a poet, which was in the year 1877." This was news to the Scots. Worse was to come when he carried out his threat and began writing.

Now the elders of Dundee want to establish a permanent memorial to him. Not if Snoop Doggy Dog gets there first.

Scientists keep God in their equation

By NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE proportion of American scientists who believe in God has hardly altered in 80 years. However, the reaction to their level of faith has changed.

A study in 1916 caused a scandal because it showed that 60 per cent were non-believers. The authors of a new study say it will surprise many for the opposite reason, as it shows that about 40 per cent still believe in God.

Edward Larson, from the University of Georgia, and Larry Witham, from Maryland, sent questionnaires to 1,000 scientists listed in the 1995 edition of *American Men and Women of Science*. The

response showed 99.3 per cent believing in a personal God, against 41.8 per cent in 1916.

Mathematicians had the highest rate of belief, at 44.6 per cent, says a report in *Nature*. Physicists and astronomers scored 22.1 per cent, overtaking biologists as the group least likely to believe. The survey drew a response from 60 per cent of those questioned, against 70 per cent in 1916.

Belief in immortality has declined from 50.6 per cent to 38 per cent. Even the number with an "intense" desire for immortality has fallen from 34 per cent 9.9 per cent.

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Veterans keep the Falklands spirit alive 15 years on

By ALAN HAMILTON

AN ARRAY of faces from what now seems another age met in London yesterday to establish a veterans' association for the 29,500 servicemen — and quite a few civilians — who wear the South Atlantic Medal as proof that they took part in the defence of the Falkland Islands. It was 15 years ago yesterday that Argentina seized the islands; it took 74 days and 255 British lives to wrest them back.

Some of the faces have kept the memory alive, none more so than the former Welsh Guardsman Simon Weston. Yesterday for the first time since he was rushed to a field hospital with terrible burns sustained on Sir Galahad, he met the naval surgeon who first patched him up. Dr Rick Jolly, who commanded the Ajax Bay field hospital, has become chairman of the newly formed South Atlantic Medal Association. "This is the first

time I have met Simon standing up," he said yesterday at the association's inaugural meeting at the Falklands Government's London office.

Dr Jolly said that the association had been formed because many servicemen in the task force were now retiring and might lose contact with their comrades. Many who took part, especially naval personnel, never saw the islands they were rescuing, being stuck on support ships far out at sea. "The prime purpose of this association is comradeship, but I hope, in the future, that members will travel to the Falklands to meet the population they rescued," Dr Jolly said.

The association was largely the brainchild of Deniz Connick, a lance corporal in the 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment, who lost a leg in the battle for Mount Longdon. "This is about comradeship, which remains very strong

among those who fought in the South Atlantic. The Falklands war was unique; it was not long, but it was very vicious," Mr Connick said yesterday.

Mr Connick has never been back to the Falklands, but he has visited Argentina and shaken hands with his former enemies, including the soldier of the Argentine 7th Infantry Regiment who shot his leg off. "I have no bitterness towards them; we were fellow-sufferers. But it is sad that the Argentinian Government does not look after its war veterans properly. Many of them are in extreme poverty, reduced to selling matches on street corners."

What would veterans think now if the British Government took a softer line? "I still get suspicious when London has very pally talks with Buenos Aires over the mineral rights of the islands," Mr Connick said. "It would be politically

foolish of any British government to lose interest in the Falklands, not only because of the wishes of the islanders, but because of the sacrifice and the commitment we made in 1982. The lost lives must not be wasted."

Sir Rex Hunt, the governor at the time of the invasion,

who has hung up his plumed hat and lives in retirement in Berkshire, said he believed the war had changed the Falklands immeasurably for the better. "They are comparatively prosperous now, thanks to licensing the fishing grounds, and anything they do now they do with their own money.

Their only call on the British taxpayer is for the defence force we keep there."

Two of the most famous names from the conflict are unconnected with the new association, but will meet at a commemoration next Tuesday. Baroness Thatcher and the Duke of York, who was a

naval helicopter pilot, will attend a dinner on board the P&O liner *Canberra*, which was commandeered as a troop transport in 1982.
□ *Holders of the South Atlantic Medal who wish to join the association should write to PO Box 82, Blackwood, Gwent, NP2 0YE.*



Dr Rick Jolly with Simon Weston yesterday. They last met in an emergency medical station 15 years ago

Prize pet owners 'trailed' by dog snatchers

By RICHARD DUCE

A GANG of dog smugglers was thought last night to be behind the disappearance of four prizewinning pomeranians taken from a car.

Police believe that the owners, Helen Turnbull, 58, and her husband, David, 66, could have been followed by the thieves after they left the UK Toy Dog show in Stafford last weekend. On the drive home to Dunfermline the couple stopped for a pub meal near Wigan. When they returned to the car, the dogs had gone.

A Lancashire police spokesman said: "This looks like the work of professional thieves. We are working on the assumption that the Turnbulls were followed up the M6." Ports have been alerted over the theft, as it is feared that the dogs might be smuggled abroad for sale.

The dogs are like small chows and weigh about 4lb each. The owners say that each dog could be worth as much as £10,000. They are offering a £2,000 reward for their safe return.

Mrs Turnbull, who has bred pomeranians for 15 years, said: "They are such friendly creatures. We are beside ourselves with worry. We have been inundated with messages of support from dog breeders the length and breadth of the country."

She added: "My husband has cancer and is not a well man. He was not going to come to the show in Stafford, but he persuaded me to let him come. It was the first time he had been out since November, and this has made him worse."

A spokesman for the Kennel Club said yesterday that it was unlikely that the thieves would be able to make huge profits from their crime. Without paperwork proving the pedigree of the animals, it was unlikely that they would fetch more than £200 each, even if they were sold abroad.

Ayckbourn theatre wins reprieve

By PAUL WILKINSON

A LIFELINE has been thrown to the playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn to save the £5.2 million theatre he opened in Scarborough a year ago.

North Yorkshire councillors voted yesterday to reverse a decision taken last month to cut all financial support for theatres in the county. The decision had jeopardised other grants for the Stephen Joseph Theatre and threatened its closure when its existing funds run out later this year.

Councillors agreed to give up to half of the £80,000 the county had promised. The change of heart should mean that £175,000 of lottery funding from the Arts Council should now also be released. A spokesman for Sir Alan said: "This decision to give us

a grant does make our future much more secure, but we are not 100 per cent safe yet. We will still have a shortfall of around £40,000 by the end of the season and we must now look at ways of making that up. It will be tough, but we think we can do it. Either we will have to raise it elsewhere or we shall have to make cuts."

Sir Alan, who shows all his productions first at Scarborough, where he began his drama career, told councillors two weeks ago that their funding cut would destroy the theatre. There would not be enough cash in the bank to continue beyond this summer and the theatre, which the county council had praised, would close indefinitely only 18 months after its opening

last spring, he said. He has fought a running battle for six months with local politicians over their financial support.

Despite public acclaim at the arrival of a theatre as good as many in the West End, there was a great deal of muttering about the cost to local taxpayers. At the turn of the year he was only just able to head off district councillors in Scarborough who wanted to cut their £50,000 annual commitment to the theatre in favour of more basic public services. At the time he told them: "This theatre is the kiss of life for this town. We generate ten times more in revenue for the town than we asked for."

North Yorkshire has told the theatre, however, that it



Ayckbourn: he had said cut would close theatre

should not expect financial support next year and that this year's grant will be paid only on production of an acceptable business plan.

Leading article, page 23

Fight on the beaches over 'shantytown' holiday huts

By IAN MURRAY

HOSTILITIES have flared between holidaymakers who like to spend summer days looking out at the sea from a rented beach hut, and seaside residents who have to spend all year looking at the huts.

The feelings of local people surfaced in Felixstowe, Suffolk, after vandals set fire to three huts and the charred remains were left on the beach. When the local paper described them as "cherished and treasured" objects, the public's response was not exactly unanimous in agreement.

Ray Braybrook, whose sea-front home overlooks a site

for some of the town's 1,000 huts, wrote to complain that they were not treasured or cherished by anyone living within 30 miles of the resort, and added: "I don't condone the mindless vandalism and destruction of these blots on the landscape, but I do think they should be relocated to some South American shantytown where they wouldn't look out of place."

Yesterday Mr Braybrook said that he had since received backing from many residents who were tired of this "total eyesore which is nothing more than converted garden sheds painted some

ghastly colour". However, Valerie Donovan, who is responsible for Felixstowe's leisure amenities, said that many of the huts were handed down from generation to generation and that the paintwork was restricted to the regulation colours of primrose yellow, sky blue, pink, grey, cream or dark green.

Jim Butters, chairman of the now-defunct Beach Hut Owners' Association, said: "Hut owners provide a fair old revenue in rent and spending in local shops. I pay £289 a year for a barren bit of land."

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ELECTION 97

POLL DAY

-28

■ The Conservative Manifesto in full
— see pullout in section 2
■ Anatole Kaletsky on The Tories' tax
wheeze — page 8
■ The Times/Mori poll — page 12



“...the Prime Minister had slipped
into his Zen mode of delivery
— we call it his Mystic Meg voice”

Matthew Parris — page 14



“Why have the people of Tooting
been chosen to hear Vanessa
Redgrave's political message?”

Joe Joseph — page 13

Heseltine hawks the big issues

WITH a single bound, Michael Heseltine leapt from his helicopter yesterday, hot from the manifesto launch, to bring the good Tory tidings to Cheltenham. The key words were power and excitement.

The famous mane streaming and suntan eclipsing the paler faces of the Cotswolds, the Tories' answer to Hale Bopp pumped hands and preached as he cut a swath through shops and streets. “Britain is booming. It's the most exciting time that I can remember,” he declared outside the Safeways supermarket at Up Hatherley, just outside Cheltenham. He repeated himself all the way to Worcester, where he came to deploy his charms on Worcester Woman, the other half of Essex Man: the affections of the swing-voting lady are diagnosed by pollsters as the key to electoral salvation.

“The mood is changing,” the Deputy Prime Minister hammered away. “I can see it in the full shopping baskets. I can hear it in the cash registers. The people are getting more power,” he told the Safeways crowd, after a lasagne lunch with the manager and a test-run on the high-tech self-service checkout system.

Not everyone was convinced by all the buzz. “It's not exciting. We're not getting more power,” insisted Claire Taylor, 67. “My grandson got a 2-1 at university and now he's packing cigarettes.” “Well, the international economists all said Britain was booming,” said Hezza, turning back to project more excitement at passers-by.

Cheltenham, its gentle Georgian avenues splashed with the yellows and greens of spring, is a key target for the Tories since Nigel Jones of the Liberal Democrats snatched the seat from them in 1992.



Charles Bremner
on tour with the
Tory party's top
salesman

amid a dispute over the Conservative's choice of a black candidate. This time round, the Tories are taking no such chance. They are fielding John Todman, a local lawyer and council member, who was basking yesterday in his dose of Hezza energy as he shepherded him out of what he described as his battle-bus: a blue Range Rover.

Not for Mr Todman any of that abrasive self-assertion picked up from the American campaign trail. Steering Mr H and his gaggle of Middle England Tories along Cheltenham's decorous Promenade, Mr Todman displayed an English self-effacement in the best Hugh Grant manner. Accosting a voter, he apologised for the intrusion: “I

am only the Conservative candidate. Nothing too vital.”

While Hezza was proving himself vital enough for two, recent heart attack notwithstanding, as he greeted children and dished out good-to-see-you's it was clear that his attractions had made a greater impact than his name. “There's that sexy one from the telly,” said a thirty-something admirer. “Wouldn't mind a bit of sleaze with him. But what's his name?”

“That's Ashdown — you know, the Lib Dem,” said her friend.

The Deputy PM was well enough known to the man selling *The Big Issue*, outside Cheltenham's shopping mall. “Support the homeless — unlike the Conservative Party, who couldn't give a toss,” he shouted as Mr Heseltine hove into view. The politician obliged, forking out £1.60 for two issues and waiting for his change. “The big issue is who governs Britain,” he beamed.

Mr Heseltine's concern diluted the bravado of Simon Savage, the 21-year-old magazine seller, producing a flush that reached to the third ring on his left ear. “Oh well — they're all as bad as each other, these politicians,” he said.

A quick trip up the M25 and Mr Heseltine was doing battle to keep a Tory seat. Though Labour has never won Worcester, boundary changes mean it would take only a 3 per cent swing to hand the seat to Tony Blair's man. Heeders were out in force but provided nothing that Hezza could not handle. Bob Short, 67, a pensioner, asked him if he could live on £70 a week. Mr Heseltine declined to answer. On the town's female symbol, Mr Heseltine was brief: “Worcester Woman



Mr Heseltine conducting his counter-offensive in a Cheltenham supermarket: “I can see a changing mood in full shopping baskets”

doesn't exist. We are sure that we can persuade Worcester woman. Worcester man, Worcester young person and Worcester pensioner of the danger of new Labour, and that you can only be sure with the Conservatives.” Then it was back to the helicopter and home. □ Additional reporting by Joanna Bale

Bullish Prescott goes through his paces at cattle market



Ben Macintyre
sees Labour's
prize campaigner
perform



Mr Prescott at Uttoxeter market. His earthy comments went down well with farmers

TWO weeks into his 10,000-mile cross-country drive for votes, John Prescott rode into the Staffordshire town of Uttoxeter yesterday to round up support among farmers attending the weekly cattle market.

To milk the bovine allusion, Labour's deputy leader may be seen either as the lone bull sent ahead to lead the way through the electoral pampas, or according to some, as a prize bull who has been removed to distant paddocks to stop him churning up the best pasture. This has been a long trek, even for a campaigner of Mr Prescott's prime pedigree, and as he emerged from the bus on Uttoxeter High Street to the strains of *Things Can Only Get Better*, he was plainly pawing the ground and ready to charge if offered a red rag.

When asked to comment on reports that he has been promised the title of Deputy Prime Minister in the event of a Labour victory, he rolled his eyes and snorted dangerous-

ly. “I don't comment on that sort of nonsense. I'm deputy leader of the Labour Party and I just get on with the job of winning the election. That's all there is to it.”

When photographers tried to prod him into the packed auction room, he tossed his head. “I'm not going in there because the farmers don't like the flashes going off when they're bidding.” His handlers, arms flapping, tried to head him back inside, and were painfully goaded with some sharp and earthy expletives, drawing appreciative glances from the local farming folk, who like a beast with spirit.

But after half an hour chewing the cud with the market folk, Mr Prescott's usual good humour was renewed. The Labour deputy leader, clad in unruly pin-stripe, even allowed himself to be hoisted onto a wall to be photographed trying to pat a rather startled Friesian.

The strain of his dash around 65 key seats in six weeks, from Falmouth to In-

verness, may be beginning to tell, but Mr Prescott is born to this kind of heavy work. A market is the perfect foil for his brand of off-the-cuffery. No sale item is insignificant to the campaign, even if the links require some energetic lateral thinking.

At the sweet stall: “Got any gob-stoppers? Give 'em to John Major.”

At the fish stall: “I like smoked haddock. We used to have a lot more fish in 1979.”

To a man frying chips: “I used to be a waiter for five years.”

To a small boy with a plastic gun: “Gor blimey [the first time I can recollect hearing someone use this expression] — give it to John Major. He's crying in the corner, no one's listening to him. Give 'em the gun.”

Mad cows were the main theme of the day. At the height of the BSE furor, Uttoxeter cattle market, the largest in the region, was all but deserted. Burton constituency is No 46 on the Labour target list, requiring a 3.5 per cent swing

to unseat the Conservative, Ivan Lawrence. The constituency carries heavy symbolism, since the last time Labour won here was in 1995.

Anger over damage to the beef industry may be the critical factor in the local race. “We've got to restore confidence after this Government's record,” Mr Prescott reassured his listeners at every turn.

Some farmers at yesterday's market were so angry that they appeared unsure whom to blame. Mr Prescott was accosted by an irate, red-faced farmer with extravagant side-whiskers. “Why haven't you got rid of all the bloody foreign beef?” he shouted, and clumped off.

“He thinks we're already in power,” said Mr Prescott.

Thoroughly mollified by his brief ramp in the heart of the West Midlands countryside, a docile and beaming Mr Prescott eventually trotted up the ramp into his bus, to continue the electoral bidding in the next market and the next town.

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Tories' tax wheeze has several hidden stings

IN principle, it is hard to object to John Major's idea of offering some tax rebates to people who stay at home to look after children and elderly dependants.

At present, Britain is one of the only advanced industrial countries that applies essentially the same tax system to married couples as to individuals without family responsibilities and dependants. In America, Germany and France, for example, there are different tax schedules for families and individuals. Married couples are allowed to choose whichever schedule requires them to pay less tax.

But, like many ingenious wheezes to bribe voters with their own money, yesterday's plan to give non-working spouses a tax break worth £900 annually comes with several hidden stings.

The most obvious political problem is the awkward reality that it was John Major himself who presided over the removal of the tax privileges he now wants to dangle in front of married voters. Until April 1990, when Mr Major was Chancellor of the Exche-



The privileges John Major is hoping will appeal to married voters bear a close resemblance to the ones he took away as Chancellor, writes Anatole Kaletsky

quer, married couples were allowed to pool their personal allowances — precisely the privilege he now wants to reinstate, albeit in a restricted form.

It was also Mr Major who, as Chancellor, began the long freeze on the £1,720 married couples' allowance — the one vestige of recognition of family responsibilities that was left in the tax system after April 1990. As a result of these reforms undertaken under Mr Major, a working couple with earnings of £30,000 a year now pays roughly £1,500 less in taxes than a family where only one spouse brings in the same income while the other stays at home.

Yesterday's announcement, therefore, may merely remind married voters of the tax

privileges they have lost in the past seven years.

The second drawback of Mr Major's proposal is that it will produce anomalies and disappointments once voters read the small print. While a woman who does not work at all will simply be able to transfer to her working husband her £4,045 personal allowance — and thereby save the family 23 per cent of this sum in tax — it is still unclear what will happen to a woman who earns less than £4,045. And for families in which both spouses are earning more than £4,045 annually, Mr Major's changes will have no impact at all. Since 70 per cent of married couples with children are either both working or both unemployed, the number of people who will benefit

from yesterday's proposal will be smaller than the number who may feel disappointed at having been left out.

Furthermore, since it is typically the richer Conservative-voting families who can afford for the woman not to go out to work at all, it is not clear that this plan is as well targeted as it first appears, either from a social or an electoral point of view.

This leads to the third and most important criticism of the plan. The reason that Mr Major's concession to family responsibilities has been so hedged about is simply that any more generous treatment would have been too expensive.

When Gordon Brown claimed yesterday that the introduction of transferable tax allowances for married couples would cost £3.4 billion a year while the reinstatement of joint assessment would cost £5.2 billion, he was quoting Treasury statistics. The difference between Mr Brown's figures and the £1.2 billion cost cited in the Tory manifesto gives a measure of the number of married

couples who will not benefit from Mr Major's plan.

But even the cost of £1.2 billion annually would make a significant dent in the Budget, pushing off into the blue yonder the day when the Tories' other tax "aspirations" can be realised. It is simply not realistic to imagine that Brit-

ain's "booming economy" will generate enough revenue to pay for both the marriage tax benefit and the further reduction in the standard rate of income tax also promised yesterday by Mr Major.

The economy may be fairly robust at present, but there is no prospect of its accelerating

sufficiently to transform the Treasury's financial prospects — and if the economy did accelerate, taxes would have to be raised, rather than lowered, if the Tories were serious about the promise to keep inflation under control.

In reality, therefore, the next government, whatever its political stripe, would be able to pay for dramatic tax cuts only by equally dramatic reductions in public spending. Alternatively, the Government could simply cut some taxes by raising others — precisely the course Mr Major has followed, with less than satisfactory political results.



John Major, Brian Mawhinney and Michael Heseltine putting their manifesto message across yesterday

Major's deal with Clarke made pledge possible

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

JOHN MAJOR had to break down long-standing Treasury resistance and re-order his priorities on tax to secure the inclusion in the manifesto of his eye-catching plan to help families.

The proposals to give £1.2 billion of tax breaks for married couples with children or dependent relatives — allowing the non-working wife or husband to transfer their tax allowance to their working partner — have long been favoured by much of the Cabinet. But they have made it into the manifesto this time only as a result of a classic behind-the-scenes compromise between Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, and the Prime Minister.

Some time ago Mr Major ordered his policy unit to come up with manifesto ideas to help families. But plans for the full transferability of allowances for all married couples were turned down by the Chancellor as recently as 1995 on the ground that it would cost in the region of £3.5 billion. Mr Major's policy advisers then came up with the idea of restricting the relief to couples with children or dependent relatives at home.

The targeted nature of the plan, the much-reduced cost and Mr Major's readiness to downgrade his hopes of abolishing capital gains and inheritance taxes went most of the way to convincing Mr Clarke. The party's desperate need for radical and popular measures to present to the electorate was the clincher, even though some Treasury sources found it hard yesterday to display much enthusiasm for the plan.

The Tories went to considerable lengths to show how their extra spending plans outlined in the manifesto, including the basic pension-plus scheme, the "respite" programme for carers, and the help for schools to become specialist — would be more than compensated for by new savings, the biggest from the plan to sell off licences from the new generation of mobile phones.

But ministers had to admit

that there was no specific provision within the Government's forward plans for the £1.2 billion allowances transfer plan, which could add about £17.50 a week to the incomes of almost two million families.

At a series of briefings after the manifesto announcement, the ministers made clear that the money would come eventually from making deeper cuts in public spending, growth in the economy and the impact of "fiscal drag", the phenomenon that produces greater tax revenue as people moving into higher tax brackets.

Mr Major said that the new plan would be introduced as soon as it was affordable — emphasising that it would "probably" be in the second year of the new Parliament.

At the same time he honoured his deal with Mr Clarke and allowed his previous aspira-

The Conservative Party manifesto appears in full today in Section 2. The Labour Party manifesto will appear in full tomorrow.

ration to abolish capital gains and inheritance taxes to take a back seat. The manifesto says merely that the Tories will continue to reduce the burden of capital gains tax and inheritance tax "as it is prudent to do so". Mr Major told yesterday's press conference he had not given up hope of abolishing them but it was unlikely that this would be possible in the next Parliament.

Reducing the basic rate of income tax to 20p — although for the first time the Tories have set a five-year timescale on the objective — will also have to take second place to the allowances plan.

It was clear yesterday that Treasury ministers remain uncomfortable about the tax-allowances plan. In truth, no Chancellor likes being told what is going to be in his Budget of two years' time.

Risk takers offered a cash inducement

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

SMALL businesses would get a tax boost under a Tory government from manifesto plans to cut their corporation tax and business rates.

The schemes to reward "Britain's risk takers" is an effort to woo the five million small businesses that have constantly complained that the tax system discriminates against them.

The lower rate of corporation tax would fall from a basic rate of 23p to 20p in line with personal taxation. The move maintains a commitment to keep the two rates the same. Business rates would also be cut. At present small

companies in England pay £14 billion in annual business rates, at 43.2p in the pound on the rateable value of their properties. It is now possible that the first stage of rateable value, maybe up to £250,000, will be ignored for a small business, and that variable levels of rates will be introduced.

But the manifesto contains no boost for the self-employed. Stephen Alambritis, spokesman for the Federation of Small Businesses, said: "Although we welcome the moves on the business rate, it is unfair that the self-employed must pay tax at up to 40 per cent while small businesses may be able to pay at 20 per cent."

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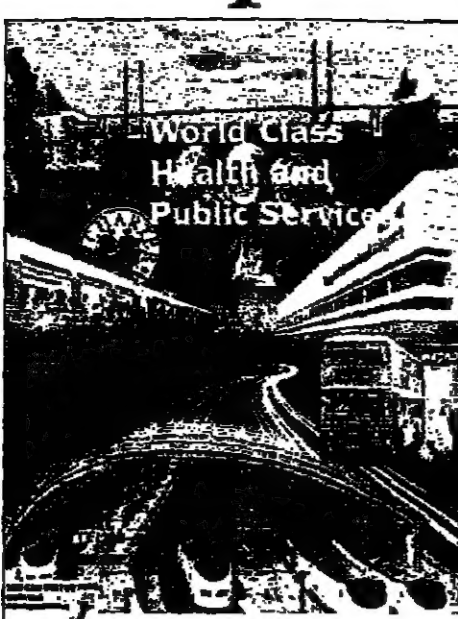
Slick design creates picture of political correctness

PARTY manifestos are seldom works of art. It is true that the 1983 Tory manifesto was written by a novelist, Ferdinand Mount, and some since then have had passages which now read like fiction, but the prose in yesterday's document will not win any prizes. The pictures, however, break new ground.

They certainly hint at themes which are not always fully developed in the text. The pictures send out a mixed message of political correctness and Euroscepticism, and they even have a certain charm.

Previous manifestos have been monochrome but this one looks like a multinational's annual report, perhaps appropriately, given the emphasis on the Government's record. The 56 pages are studded with graphs and fringed with photographs.

The work has been kept within the Tory family. Although no credit is given in the text, a Central Office source confirmed that the choice of pictures was left to Smithfield Design, a subsidiary of Lowe Bell, whose chairman Tim Bell is one of the Tories' main media advisers. Smithfield declined to



Michael Gove detects a sub-text in the colourful montages of glossy photographs

comment on its choice of shots, citing client confidentiality.

The pages were scrutinised before publication by the party chairman, Brian Ma-whinney, and the Welsh and Scottish Secretaries, William

Hague and Michael Forsyth. The cover bears a handsome snap of the Prime Minister, all toothy grin and Austin Reed, but unfortunately accompanying Mr Major's foreword is a mugshot that looks like a still from his son's

camcorder. The presentation picks up inside.

Each of the five chapters, from "The Enterprise Centre of Europe" to "A Confident, United and Sovereign Nation", begins with a full-page montage of snaps which cre-

ate an effect similar to that of a stained-glass window in a modern cathedral.

Other chapters are "World Class Health and Public Service", "Opportunity and Ownership for Individuals and Families" and "A Safe

and Civil Society". The Prime Minister claimed at the manifesto launch that the Tories were an inclusive party and the pictures are suitably PC as well as high-tech. In the frontispiece to the Enterprise section, a black woman in a

white lab coat processes data in one corner, a rig stands proudly in North Sea waters in another and at the centre, between a super-Sky dish and the City by night, a stern woman in a bob lectures two male executives. Central Of-

fice said that the shots were not posed by actors - "Oh no, they're all real people, action shots," said one source.

The inclusive theme permeates the United Nations picture page. Scottish pride is assuaged with a shot of Edinburgh Castle and the Scott Monument from Princes Street. The Welsh get a view of Conwy Castle and, in a nod to Ulster's Unionists, a postcard shot of the Giant's Causeway in Co Antrim is slipped in at the bottom.

The English are given a glimpse of some green and pleasant land. With every nationality nodded to in a visual echo of the eye of battle scene from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, we are left in little doubt who the real enemy is from the giant picture at the centre: "It's a Eurofighter," explained one Central Office staffer.

Tantalisingly tucked into a corner of the page is a fragment of a musical score overlaid by a CD. Central Office declined to reveal what the tune was: "It's meant to symbolise our commitment to the arts - but one thing you can be sure of, it isn't the European anthem."

Manifesto omits one tiny detail: how to win

ANY election manifesto has to pass three tests - does it address the real problems facing Britain, are its promises affordable and is it politically credible? Labour in 1983 failed all three with the infamous "longest suicide note in history". The Tories yesterday passed one-and-a-half, or perhaps two, out of three. Their manifesto offered a plausible plan for a further term in government, but the party still lacks a convincing re-election strategy.

The Major Government has a solid economic record on growth, inflation and unemployment after earlier serious mistakes. Britain is now in a strong competitive position which could be put at risk by measures which add to business costs. But the Tories' record on public spending and tax is less impressive than their rhetoric. They can claim to have produced lower spending and tax shares than most of our competitors, but cuts in income tax have involved increases in other taxes.

Moreover, the manifesto proposals are not quite as fiscally responsible as the Tory high command was pretending yesterday. The Treasury and Downing Street compromised over the long-term reform of pensions (which would cost very little in the next parliament), over the transfer of personal allowances between married couples and over the phasing out of capital taxes. Ministers sounded a little ragged yesterday when explaining how the cost of the transfer of allowances would be financed. It is always right to be suspicious when politicians talk about the proceeds of growth and fiscal drag. The betting is that existing public spending programmes will have to be cut back and indirect taxes may have to rise.

Only a starry-eyed optimist would believe that it is possible to change allowances, cut the basic rate to 20 per cent, keep public spending less than 40 per cent of national income by the end of the next parliament and, at the same time, virtually eliminate public borrowing by 2000.

The Tories are serious about reforming public services and extending choice and improving standards in education - even if the idea of locally maintained



PETER RIDDELL

schools sounds an unsatisfactory halfway house. The Tories' proposals on pension reform address the crucial long-term issue of the affordability of the welfare state, whatever doubts there may be about the medium-term costs.

The weakness of the manifesto is political. The proposals are aimed at Middle England - at rallying traditional Tory supporters via the tax, education and law-and-order themes. The proposals for breaking up the remaining bastions of local authority housing may help the have-nots but the main focus of the manifesto is on the haves, both existing and aspiring. There is little to appeal to waverers and those who have switched behind Tony Blair.

John Major was yesterday at his most convincing as chief executive of HMG plc, the safe and experienced manager. But he is also leader of the Tory party and that is a far less attractive animal. The strengths of the Government are being undermined by the weaknesses of the party. It is all very well for the manifesto to restate the Government's "negotiate and decide" approach: on the single currency, but a sizeable minority of Tory candidates will explicitly reject this approach in their election addresses. Will their comments be disowned?

The manifesto never really tackles the political question of whether any party should remain in power for so long. The Tories seem neither to understand nor have an answer for the "time for a change" mood. That has been far more powerful, so far, than all the arguments about competitiveness. For once, taxes and the economy may not be enough.

The weakness of the manifesto is political. The proposals are aimed at Middle England, at rallying the traditional Tory supporters. There is little to appeal to waverers and those who have switched to Tony Blair?

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Gillian Bowditch and Shirley English report on the first 'tartan edition' of the Conservative manifesto

Forsyth offers more choice and prosperity for less tax

MICHAEL FORSYTH, the Scottish Secretary, launched the first separate Scottish Conservative manifesto yesterday, denying that it had come 18 years too late to stem the desire for a devolved Scottish parliament.

Mr Forsyth said that the manifesto, *Fighting for Scotland*, expanded choice for the Scottish people, increased the power of the individual and preserved Scotland's identity within the Union. "The thrust

THE TORIES IN SCOTLAND

of our policy is to reduce the amount taken by the State from people's pockets," he said.

Many of the policies are fundamentally the same as those already promoted by the Tories, but the 52-page Scottish manifesto has been completely rewritten for a Scottish audience.

Harriet Harman, Labour's

social security spokeswoman, who was visiting Scotland yesterday, attacked the Scottish manifesto as "desperate and dishonest and dangerous". She said: "The Tories claim their manifesto stands for families. But the Tories' manifesto will fly in the face of family values. As every Scottish family knows, you should tell the truth and you should

keep your promises and the Tories are doing neither."

Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, said that the Tory manifesto amounted to "tying a tartan ribbon around a package of anti-Scottish policies".

The manifesto commits the Tories to fighting the "tartan tax" that a Labour government might introduce to fund a Scottish parliament. Mr Forsyth said that such a tax would destroy Scottish jobs, reduce pay packets and undermine Scotland's financial services industry.

The manifesto pledges to double Scottish living standards in the next 25 years, increase home ownership from 60 per cent to 70 per cent in the next five years and increase spending on health in real terms annually for the next five years.

In health, prescribing by nurses would be introduced, voluntary hospices would be adopted and one-stop clinics and "telemedicine" would be expanded to allow patients in



Michael Forsyth presenting the manifesto in Edinburgh yesterday

outlying areas specialist care via video links with hospitals.

The Scottish manifesto also highlights proposals to help rural areas, in particular encouraging greater access to the one million acres of woodland owned by the Forestry Commission, and maintaining tax and rating relief for farms. It

emphasises the Tory party's support for "traditional country pursuits".

Under the heading "unionism and patriotism", the manifesto pledges enhanced roles for the Scottish Grand Committee and the Scottish Economic Council. There is, unusually for a manifesto, a

page attacking Labour and Liberal Democrat plans to create a Scottish parliament, which it claims would reduce Scotland's influence at Westminster and in Europe and create tensions with local authorities.

Magnus Linklater, page 22

EDUCATION

A FIFTH Tory Government would raise standards in Scotland's schools and reward excellence, Raymond Robertson, the Scottish Education Minister, said.

Each school would be given a set of standards, based on its past performance and reflecting its individual characteristics and location. The standards would be reviewed annually and increased each year. Failing schools would be examined by the schools inspectorate.

Schools would be invited to be assessed for a quality mark in several areas, including teaching, attendance rates, uniform, access to musical tuition, sports, out-of-school trips and extra-curricular activities. A cash reward for quality would go directly to the school.

The assisted-places scheme would be expanded to create a Scottish scholarship scheme, allowing talented pupils from less privileged backgrounds to develop their skills at specialist independent schools.



Alex Salmond launching the SNP campaign yesterday

We're stronger than ever, says Salmond

By MAGNUS LINKLATER

THE Scottish National Party launched its general election campaign yesterday by accusing the Tories of being hostile to Scotland, and Labour of being unsound on devolution. As for the Liberal Democrats, they would be squeezed out when it came to the final vote, Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, said.

Mr Salmond argued that both Labour and Tories now represented only Middle Eng-

land. "The SNP have our strongest, most sustained level of support ever in advance of a general election," he said. "We are better organised, better financed, and more solidly based than ever before, and our freedom message will prosper between now and polling day."

Labour's pretence of being firm on devolution was undermined by having failed to deliver it in previous years. The SNP was the only party with a clear-cut policy. "While the Westminster agenda sinks in a sea of sleaze, and the electorate find it increasingly hard to tell the difference between new Labour and the Tories, independence emerges as the only big idea in the Scottish election, which a growing number of Scots are attracted to."

Mr Salmond pointed to the latest opinion poll, in *The Herald* yesterday, showing that the SNP had regained six points it had lost the previous week. It now stands at 26 per cent, compared with Labour at 53 per cent. According to the poll, the Tories had slumped to 12 per cent after further revelations of sleaze. However, a poll in *The Scotsman* showed the Tories regaining ground at 22 per cent.

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Blunkett gave praise

Food chain 'making managers'

DAVID BLUNKETT yesterday courted controversy by apparently endorsing pay and conditions in McDonald's restaurants. Part-time staff start at £3.15 an hour, well below the TUC-set minimum of £4.20. The Shadow Education Secretary was visiting the McDonald's "university" in Oxford Road, Manchester, where management skills are taught. Asked if he was embarrassed to endorse a company paying such levels, Mr Blunkett said they were well above the "slave wages" paid by some companies that forced workers to claim in-work benefits. Labour is committed to a minimum wage, but Tony Blair has refused to set a figure. Speculation suggests that the figure will be about £3.75 an hour.

Tories fail on all counts in bid to overhaul Blair

Peter Riddell says Major has more to worry about than a 27-point gap

JOHN MAJOR and the Conservatives are worse placed on virtually every measure of leader and party image than they were during the 1992 election, according to the latest MORI poll for *The Times*.

The poll, conducted on Tuesday, confirms the strength of Labour's position both on voting intentions and on underlying questions of leader and party image. The latter provides an important cross-check on the former.

Five years ago, Mr Major was well ahead of Neil Kinnock on the question of who would make the most

capable Prime Minister, while the Tories were then seen as less divided, more moderate, more professional, and as having a better team of leaders than Labour. That should have cast doubt on the figures putting Labour clearly in the lead during the campaign.

However, this time the public's views on party and leader image reinforce, rather than challenge, the findings on voting intentions. Labour not only has a huge lead over the Tories — on 55 per cent against 28 — but it is also well ahead on those image measures. For instance, Mr Blair leads Mr Major by 46 to 22 per cent on who would be the most capable Prime Minister.

Labour has also moved ahead of the Tories on issues of party division, having sensible policies, being professional in its approach, being moderate, having a good team of leaders and keeping its promises. Labour is now seen as having the best team of leaders by 40 per cent, against 20 per cent for the Tories. By a similar two-to-one margin, people believe that Labour has the best policies for the country as a whole.

Some 37 per cent think Labour is the most clear and united about what its policies should be, against 13 per cent for the Tories. A quarter of the

THE TIMES



public say Labour is ahead on all three measures, while only 8 per cent put the Tories ahead on all three.

The latest findings contrast with those in the ICM poll in *The Guardian* yesterday which put Labour on 46 per cent against 32 for the Tories. The difference is partly because ICM adjusts the figures to take account of voters' reluctance to admit their intentions. On a comparable unadjusted basis, ICM would give Labour 45 per cent, the Tories 31 per cent and the Liberal Democrats 18. The big difference is not so much the Tory vote share, as the Labour and Liberal Democrat ratings — MORI has the latter on 11 per cent — where ICM is out of line with most other polls.

The MORI survey confirms the strength of support for Labour. Nearly three-quarters of Labour supporters say they back the party very or fairly

strongly, compared with three-fifths for both the Tories and the Liberal Democrats.

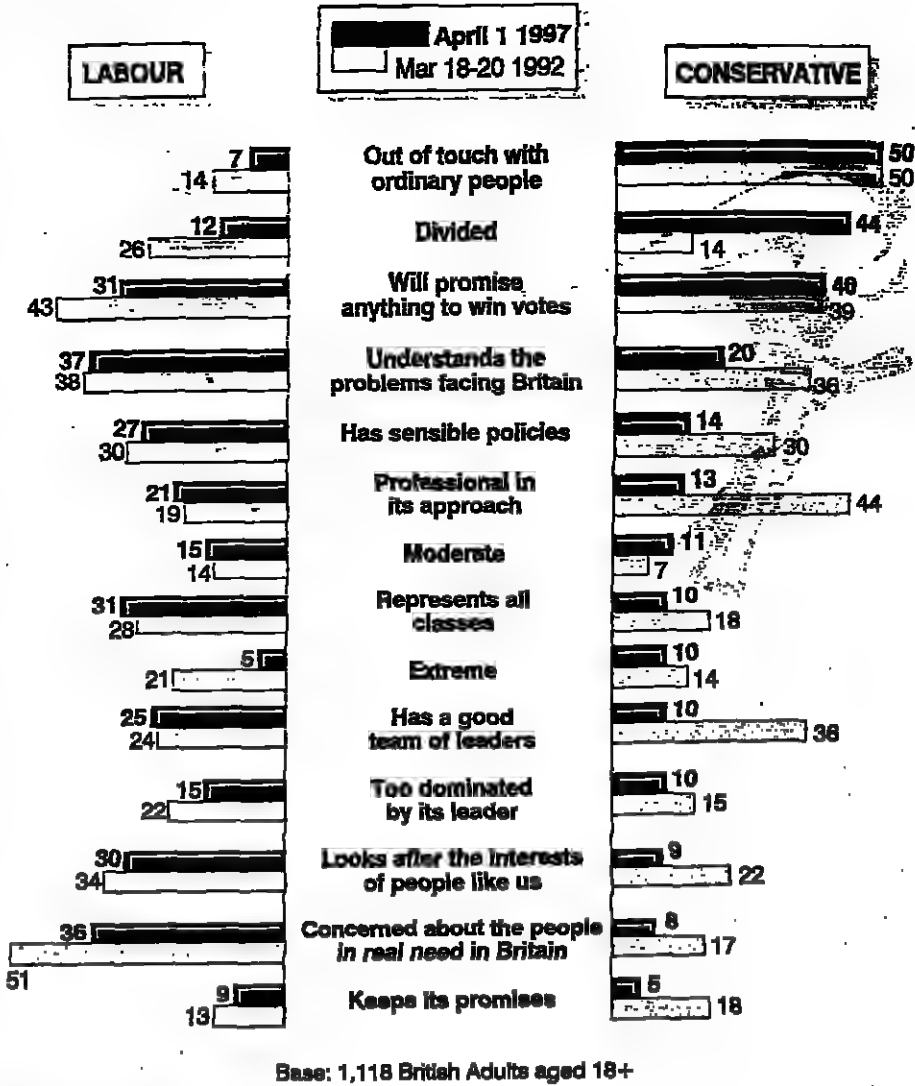
Overall, 71 per cent of those naming a party say they have definitely decided which way to vote, including 78 per cent of Labour supporters and 62 per cent of Tories. A quarter of the public say they may change their mind — of whom a quarter may switch from Labour to the Tories and a third from Tory to Labour. Nearly a third of those who have deserted the Tories since 1992 say they may change their mind, as may a quarter of those who have turned away from Labour. Waverers are more likely to switch between the main parties than to back the Liberal Democrats.

The determination to vote varies sharply according to age. Just 55 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds say they are certain or very likely to vote, compared with 85 per cent of those over 55. Some 84 per cent of professional and managerial people are sure or very likely to vote, compared with 71 per cent of unskilled workers.

MORI interviewed 1,118 adults at 84 sampling points on a face-to-face basis on April 1. Voting intention figures exclude those who say they would not vote (6 per cent), are undecided (12 per cent), or who refused to say (4 per cent).

CONSERVATIVE AND LABOUR: HOW THE PARTIES COMPARE

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Ashdown shuns spotlight to work on hospital ward

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

PADDY ASHDOWN spent two hours working on a hospital ward earlier this week in the first of several media-free trips he hopes to make during the election campaign (Polly Newton writes).

In a manoeuvre reminiscent of the occasional "secret" visit to the sick and needy by Diana, Princess of Wales, the Liberal Democrat leader helped staff serve meals and hot drinks to patients at Guy's Hospital in southeast London on Tuesday afternoon. His office tipped off only two camera crews about his whereabouts. They were waiting for him when he emerged, although they were not invited to film him on the ward.

Mr Ashdown's desire to exclude reporters did not last. He dropped in a casual reference to the visit during the Liberal Democrats' regular election campaign press conference yesterday, and was happy to expand on it afterwards. He said: "It gave me a real chance to talk to doctors and nurses. It certainly informs my view of the condition of our country today."

The nursing auxiliary to whom Mr Ashdown was assigned declined to comment yesterday. But a hospital spokeswoman said staff had been pleasantly surprised that Mr Ashdown wanted to visit without photographers and

cameramen in tow. "In the run-up to the election, we expected that people would want to come and visit. Unusually, what Paddy Ashdown wanted to do was to stay for a few hours and help out on the wards."

Mr Ashdown said he became fed-up during the last election campaign with meeting people around the country only briefly to confer what he described as "the Westminster blessing." An aide to Mr Ashdown said visits like the one to Guy's would be fitted in where possible, perhaps to a police station or a school.

In 1992, Mr Ashdown wrote a book, *Beyond Westminster*, in which he documented his travels around the country meeting people.

Giving details of the Liberal Democrats' plans for the NHS, Mr Ashdown said the party would plough an extra £550 million into the health service each year. Its proposed increase of 5p on 20 cigarettes would raise £200 million for extra staff — enough to employ 10,000 more nurses or 5,000 more doctors.

The party would raise £350 million a year by extending the levying of national insurance contributions. The extra revenue would be used to cut waiting lists to a maximum of six months within three years.

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French put looted art on show to find Jewish owners

FROM SUSAN BELL IN PARIS

THE French Government announced yesterday that almost 1,000 works of art looted from Jews during the Nazi occupation and now in the possession of French museums are to go on show in the hope that they can be returned to the owners' descendants.

At a press conference held at the Musée d'Orsay, Philippe Douste-Blazy, the Minister of Culture, announced that the 1,000 works would go on public show from April 9 in five museums: the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Centre Georges Pompidou, the National Ceramics Museum in Sèvres and the Château de Versailles.

The families of the original owners of three paintings by Picasso, Albert Gleizes and Tsuguharu Foujita, which had been looted by the Nazis and were now in the possession of the Centre Pompidou, had already been traced, Mr Douste-Blazy said yesterday, adding that the paintings would be returned to their rightful owners "after the shortest possible delay".

Pressure has been mounting on the French Govern-

ment to provide an inventory of stolen Jewish property as European governments face growing demands for the return of treasures looted by the Nazis. The Gaullists have publicly declared their intention to expose the truth about an era which for more than half a century has been shrouded in shame.

Mr Douste-Blazy said yesterday that the decision to hold the exhibitions had been made "out of concern for openness". However, he appeared anx-



Douste-Blazy: defended record of museums

ious to defend France's state museums.

"I wish to prove that the reality is more complex than the rumour according to which French museums 'received stolen goods', real treasures, pillaged from Jewish families by the Nazis," he said.

The word "looted" was often used incorrectly, he added, noting that recent research carried out by a team of museum conservationists at the Musée d'Orsay on more than 300 works showed that the majority had not been stolen but had been legally acquired on the Paris art market during the Occupation, either by private collectors or German museums.

However, this does not alter the fact that between 1940 and 1944, as more than 74,000 of France's pre-war Jewish population of 300,000 were deported and murdered in Nazi death camps, their possessions were systematically plundered by the Nazis and the Vichy French collaborators.

Vichy officials are known to have seized at least 21,000 works of art from 203 private collections under laws passed on July 22, 1941. Among the 1,963 artworks stolen from Jewish families and held "provisionally" in French museums are paintings by Monet, Renoir, Sisley, Gauguin and Courbet.

Those works which are not included in next week's exhibition, often because they are in regional museums, are listed in the 400-page catalogue. Finding the owners of the "orphaned" artworks will not be an easy task. Most perished during the war and any surviving relatives are often unaware of their inheritance.

Yesterday Mr Douste-Blazy emphasised that French museums "were never opposed to restoring works" to their original owners. However, Jewish organisations have criticised the French state museum authorities for not having actively sought the artworks' rightful owners; many will not doubt view the exhibition, although a step forward, as being shamefully overdue.



A tax policeman guards illegal alcohol dealers after a raid on their warehouse in the outskirts of Moscow. Such successes, and the queue of people who waited to file income declarations by April 1, show that the Government is making headway in

Moscow targets its tax dodgers

its campaign to turn Russia into a nation of taxpayers. However, it collected only 59 per cent of the taxes it expected in the first quarter, and may have to cut spending further, *Ssegodnya*, the daily newspaper, reported yesterday. Last month President Yeltsin reshuffled his Govern-

ment to revive an economy that has been shrinking for six years, but it has yet to launch any initiatives. Last year revenues were lower than envisaged because of the worse-than-expected economic performance and the widespread tax evasion. (AP)

Families sue for \$7bn

New York Jewish advocates, seeking to pressure European underwriters to honour long-overlooked life insurance policies of Hitler's Holocaust victims, have filed a \$7 billion (£4.4 billion) lawsuit in the United States.

The suit is being brought by nine elderly New York Jews. In some cases, it is alleged, money due to victims' families was given to German officers (Quentin Letts writes).

The companies named in the suit are from Italy, Austria, France and Germany and, according to lawyers for the plaintiffs, have financial interests in New York, where the lawsuit was filed. In early response some of the companies say they are not answerable to the claims owing to ownership changes or wartime policies.

Edward Fagan, an American lawyer involved in bring-

ing the case, said that life insurance was a popular investment in pre-war Europe among Jews. After Hitler's rise to power, however, many policy-holders lost their money and their families did not receive payments when they should have done.

To reinforce their claims, the nine relations of Holocaust victims have produced yellowing policy documents. Their stories, as with all too many Manhattan Jews, resound with the names of Nazi concentration camps and matched memories.

For the insurance companies, meanwhile, the choice may be between paying a settlement figure to get the argument to go away or, by adhering to the claims, speak to endure long-running damage to their reputations.

US gun lobby in global fight

Washington: The National Rifle Association, the powerful American gun lobby, is launching a global campaign to discourage other countries from tightening gun controls (Brownian Maddox writes).

Members are concerned that laws in other countries will constrain gun owners and traders in America. Tanja Metaksa, the NRA's new campaign leader, said in the association's magazine that "when guns are being confiscated in Australia and Britain — nations which once shared a tradition of gun ownership — NRA members must stand shoulder to shoulder".

The association has formed a pact with manufacturers and gun groups from 11 countries to oppose new international rules.

Russia and Belarus dilute pact

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT Yeltsin has signed a treaty of union with Belarus, providing a basis for closer economic, political and military ties but maintaining the neighbours' sovereignty and separate courses of development.

The document was a much watered-down version of the grandiose plan proposed last weekend by President Lukashenko of Belarus, who hoped to rebuild the Soviet era ties between his country and Russia, including a programme of economic development, a single currency and political power-sharing.

That scheme had been roundly condemned by liberal politicians in Russia, who want no association with Mr Lukashenko's dictatorial regime, as well as by economists

and the leaders of other former Soviet republics. They regard Mr Lukashenko's ideas on reintegration as unrealistic, as well as a threat to their recently gained independence.

One of the most outspoken critics of the proposed union was Leonid Kuchma, the President of Ukraine, who described it as nonsense. "If there is unification, it will be completely mechanical, because the speeds of development of Russia and Belarus are completely different, as are the leaderships," he told Interfax news agency.

Despite the pomp of the Kremlin signing ceremony, there was little substance to the eventual agreement, with much of the detail transferred to a separate charter which

will undergo public debate and revision before coming into force. Mr Yeltsin was at pains to emphasise that the treaty stopped well short of a merger between the two countries.

"The union does not create a single state," he said. "Each side keeps its sovereignty. At the same time, it takes our integration on to a qualitatively new stage." He also said that a single currency, while desirable as a long-term goal, was many years away.

Under the agreement, the countries are to set up a supreme council, to be chaired by each President on a two-year rotating basis. It will include the two Prime Ministers and parliamentary Speakers. Its powers remain unclear. Its designated pur-

pose is to outline joint policies in order to co-ordinate activities in foreign relations, the economy and the military. But it appears that the Supreme Council will not be able to overrule existing laws in either country, while agreements with a third country would remain inviolable.

Mr Lukashenko, who spent the morning with Mr Yeltsin wrangling over the final details before the signing, appeared to be trying to put the best face on what fell far short of his ambitions. The integration plan caused protests in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, from nationalists who feel Mr Lukashenko is selling their independence. Yesterday some members of a 4,000-strong march against the treaty clashed with police.

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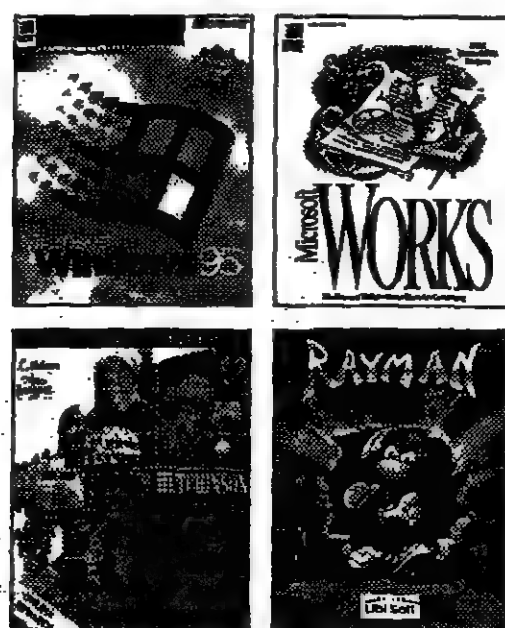
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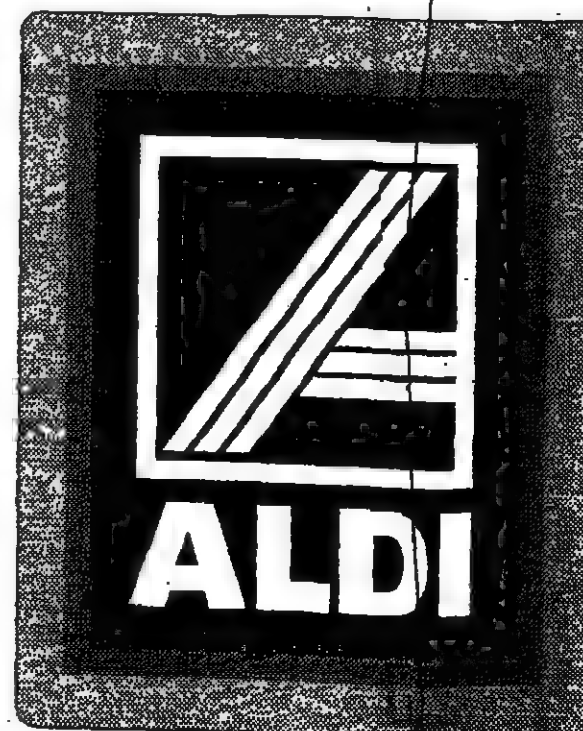
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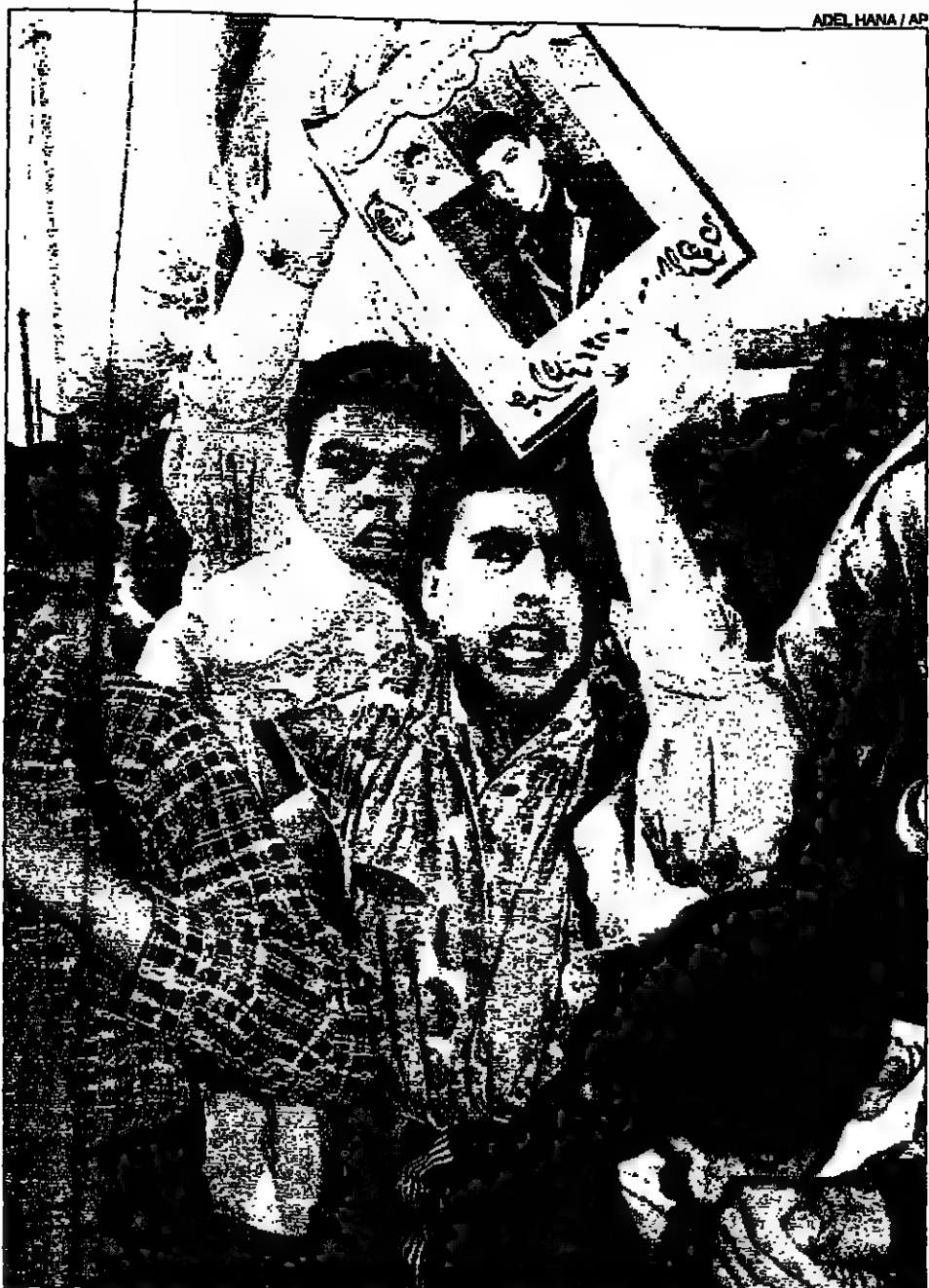
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Demonstrators in the Gaza Strip's Jabaliya refugee camp wave photographs of Abeeria Madhoun, a suicide bomber who blew himself up in Gaza on Tuesday

War fears eclipse peace hopes

EVEN before yesterday's attack on an Israeli bus near the Jalazoun refugee camp there was an ominously wide consensus that the Middle East was facing its most serious and dangerous crisis since the 1991 Gulf War.

President Mubarak of Egypt, normally one of the more moderate voices in the Arab League, went further: "Since 1977, the peace process has not degenerated to such a low level. The situation is very dangerous, and I am very worried about what will happen."

The fact that his remarks were made to a visiting Israeli journalist and splashed in *Maariv*, the Tel Aviv daily newspaper, was a sign that things have not reached that point unlike 1977, when President Sadat made his courageous flight to Jerusalem, a structure of peace is in place. The question being asked by both Israeli and Arab leaders is whether — with every day bringing more appalling violence, more bombs and more activity from the Israeli bulldozers on the east Jerusalem hillside of Har Homa — it will soon collapse completely.

The answer will not be known until Monday when Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's right-wing Prime Minister, visits President Clinton in the White House. With Russia, the joint sponsor of the 1991 Madrid peace conference, facing its own problems, the sole chance of rescuing the peace process lies with Washington. International telephone lines have been buzzing in advance, but there are mixed feelings about whether Mr Clinton has



As Binyamin Netanyahu's meeting with President Clinton nears, Christopher Walker examines the tensions building up in the Middle East

the ability to pull off a diplomatic triumph to rival his achievement last September when he brought together Mr Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, and began the slow path to a deal on Hebron.

Although the violence is not yet as bad as in September, when nearly 80 people were killed and 1,500 were injured, the framework of peace is more fundamentally strained. Trust has evaporated on both sides. The implications of the latest crisis have spread further around the Arab world. Syria has succeeded in cajoling the Arab League to isolate the Jewish State in a way many thought was forgotten.



Mubarak: "Situation is very dangerous"



Netanyahu: determined to keep up settlements

political scientist at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv. "I do not see Netanyahu returning to negotiations unless there is an explicit series of statements from Arafat condemning terror without hesitation — something he has never done."

Mr Netanyahu, whose domestic political position has been strengthened by his determination to send the bulldozers to Har Homa, made clear to me in an interview this week that there was no way that he would halt the building work, or that he would talk peace rather than security with the Palestine Liberation Organisation until he was convinced that it was cracking down on Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, and Islamic Jihad.

Yesterday his instinct was supported by a poll that showed 52 per cent of Israeli Jewish population backed continuing with the Har Homa project. "To call it a 'settlement' is a nonsense," Mr Netanyahu said. "It is a housing development and matched by developments for Palestinians in other parts of Jerusalem."

He insists that until Mr Arafat provides a secure environment by ending the new wave of terror, it is impossible to hold peace talks. Mr Arafat insists that security and political talks must be held in tandem. He is also demanding a halt to all further Israeli settlement building, a condition commentators say Mr Netanyahu could never sell to his coalition.

While Arabs and Israelis can argue ad infinitum about

the virtues and otherwise of Har Homa, a barren hillside that is one of the odder causes of war in a region never short of them, both sides are agreed that Jerusalem — an issue that should not have been negotiated until 1999 — is now on the table. "The battle for Jerusalem has begun," said Avigdor Kahalani, the Israeli Security Minister.

The raison d'être of Oslo was that mutual trust would have been built up in the interim enabling really sticky issues to be resolved more easily. Other areas outstanding include the fate of the 144 Jewish settlements sitting on occupied land. "The trouble is that Netanyahu had to choose between keeping his coalition together, or proceeding with the spirit of the Oslo accord," said one European diplomat. "He has chosen for the moment to do the former, but there is nothing to say that he will not change again under sufficient American pressure."

Those determined to see hope through the teargas clouds filling the West Bank predict that Mr Netanyahu may soon spike his extreme right wing by bringing the Labour Opposition into a national unity government.

Even should that happen, few expect him to withdraw from his core beliefs, which many Arabs are convinced will trigger war. "I want to clarify that we will not retreat to the 1967 borders, we are against a Palestinian state and we actively oppose the division of Jerusalem," he told deputies this week. "I recommend the abandoning of false dreams."

Kennedy magazine article outrages widow of Rabin

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

LEAH RABIN, the widow of Yitzhak Rabin, the former Israeli Prime Minister, has attacked the morals of John F. Kennedy Jr for publishing a magazine article by the mother of her husband's assassin.

Mrs Rabin, who is on a visit to the United States, took issue with Mr Kennedy for allowing Geula Amir to write for his political monthly, *George*. Mrs Amir, whose son, Yigal, murdered Mr Rabin in 1995, used the opportunity to defend her son.

Noting that Mr Kennedy's father, President Kennedy, was also assassinated, Mrs Rabin asked: "How, of all people, could he do such a thing? Perhaps he needed a sensational piece to sell his

paper." She accused the magazine publisher of giving Mrs Amir a platform she did not deserve.

In her article Mrs Amir speculated that Israel's security forces had wind of the Rabin assassination but did not prevent it in the early stages, hoping to take credit for a dramatic rescue of the Prime Minister.

George, an often dreary publication, needs all the controversy it can get, but Mrs Rabin's outburst — which coincides with her efforts to publicise her book — was an embarrassment for Mr Kennedy. Mrs Rabin is held in high regard in the United States.

"I would expect John Kennedy, who lost his father to an assassin's bullet when he was a mere child and grew up in the shadow of that horrible tragedy, to adopt a higher moral stand," she said.

A member of staff at the magazine said Mrs Amir's article was not intended as "an objective examination of the events surrounding Mr Rabin's assassination".

□ Gaza: Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, said Palestinian authorities had detained suspects who were plotting to kill him during a visit to Islamabad last month for an emergency meeting of the Islamic Conference Organisation, according to a report by the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa. (Reuters)



Mrs Rabin: expected a "higher moral stand"

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The lesson of baby Jessica



Dr Thomas Stuttaford on cancer treatment in pregnancy: pollution danger in the garden; treating the baby blues

Polly Carnegie, a 30-year-old music teacher, is justifiably proud of her 6lb 14oz daughter, Jessica Helen, who was born on Easter Monday. Jessica might easily have been aborted at the twelfth week of Polly's pregnancy, when it was confirmed that the lump she had found in her breast was a cancer. As it is, Jessica had an uneventful delivery, is in excellent health, and is already a delight to her family.

Polly comes from a medical family: her mother teaches nursing at the University of East Anglia and her father-in-law is a retired GP.

'Polly's decision has done other mothers a service'

— so the concept of making risk-benefit analyses cannot have been entirely strange to her. Even so, she and her husband John were devastated when they were initially given an alternative to consider. Either the baby would have to be aborted so that Polly could have radiotherapy as well as surgery, or the pregnancy would be allowed to continue with no chemotherapy — a choice which would ensure the baby's survival, but only by sacrificing the best chance for the mother.

Polly was at the time attending the West Suffolk Hospital, in Bury St Edmunds, where she and her family received every support and guidance. Surgery for the removal of the breast, and dissection of the glands in her armpit, showed that the tumour had spread into three of the 17 glands examined.

The consultants at Bury St Edmunds suggested that Polly should obtain a second opinion about the best way to proceed, and she and her husband elected to consult Professor Michael Baum, who had just moved from the Royal

Marsden to University College and the Middlesex Hospital, in London. It was suggested that there was a third option — Polly could have chemotherapy once the baby was completely formed.

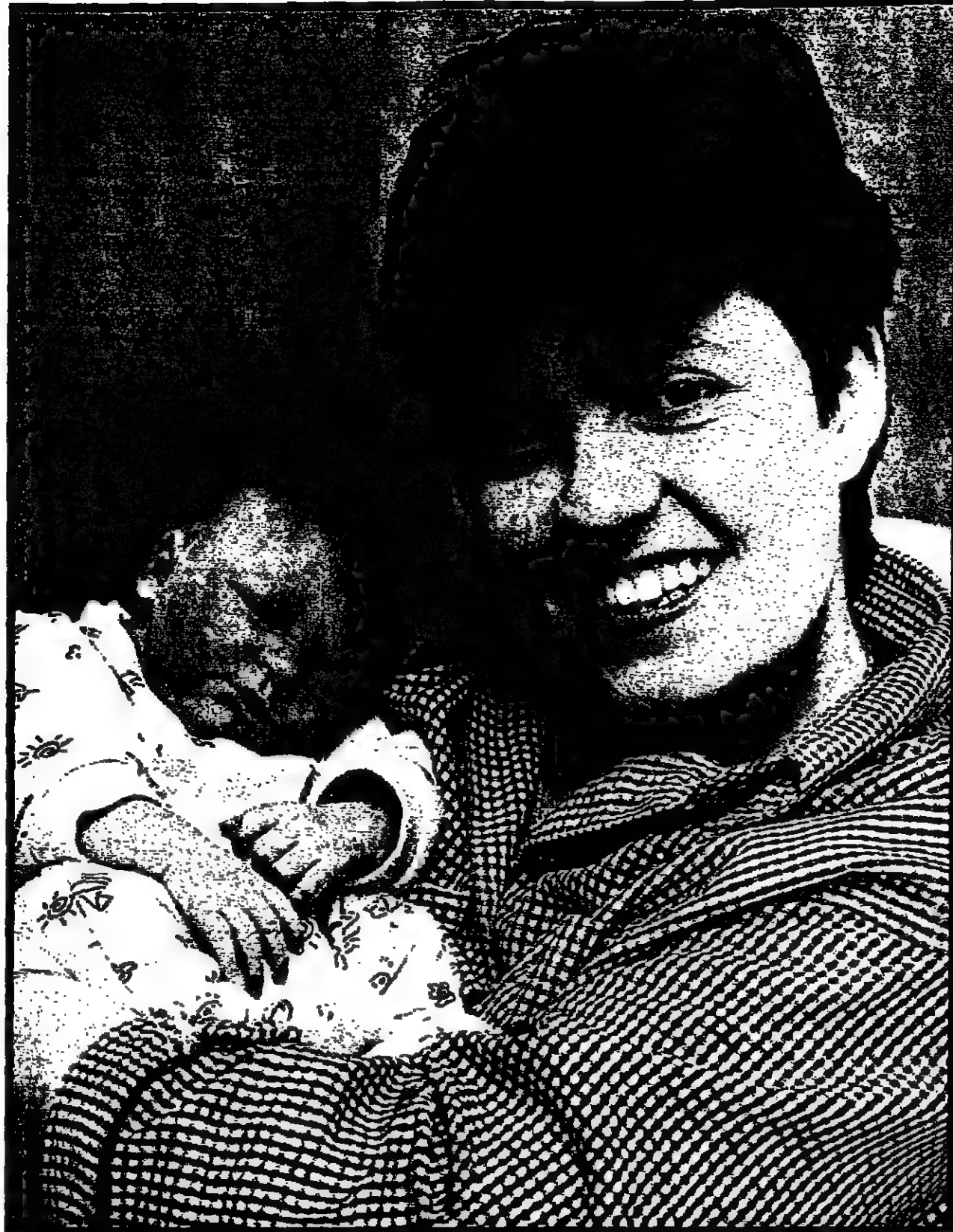
Twice a month from the twentieth week of her pregnancy, she travelled to London to receive the standard chemotherapy, an injection of cyclophosphamide, methotrexate and 5-fluorouracil — the well-known mixture known as CMF. She suffered few side-effects, other than tiredness.

The evidence is that this regime, given once the foetal

organs and systems are formed, is safe for the child. Dr Leonard Price, of the London Clinic, who is a great advocate of chemotherapy in appropriate cases, said: "Polly has done a great service by publicising her treatment. There is a misapprehension, common even among some doctors, that because the foetus is a dividing-cell system, chemotherapy in later pregnancy will damage it. There is no evidence for this."

About 20 cases such as Polly's have been treated at the Marsden during the past ten years in a similar way. However, radiotherapy — which would often be given to a woman with a cancer of this sort — is not appropriate during pregnancy because of the possibility of damage to the IQ of the child. There may also be other side-effects. Now that the child is delivered, radiotherapy presumably remains an option in Polly's case.

It is the aim of all doctors to diagnose breast cancer early. Diagnosis is not made easier by the number of women who have benign mammary disease, usually manifest by nod-



Polly Carnegie with daughter Jessica: under earlier medical regimes the baby might not have been born

ular breast changes, sometimes with cystic changes. Mammography has helped enormously in the diagnosis of malignant disease in these cases; before it became available, a cancerous growth could easily be lost among the surrounding lumps and bumps, and hidden rather as

tern's eggs are when laid on a pebbly beach.

Patients with nodular, or cystic breasts, should have mammograms more frequently than their contemporaries, and if indicated their cysts should be aspirated.

Twenty-five per cent of all women have severely nodular

breasts and 7 per cent have cysts present.

Women with breast cysts have a small increase in the chance of developing cancer. Research has suggested that this is not because the cyst is pre-malignant, but because the same conditions which caused the cyst might later

produce a cancer. A recent report in the *British Medical Journal* from Italy has shown that the chemical composition of the cysts has an important predictive value. The increase risk of breast cancer is concentrated in women in whom a proportion of potassium to sodium is high.

Time to put smoky mowers out to grass

You don't have to see daffodils in the gardens to know that winter is over: the noise of lawnmowers is as much a harbinger of spring as any flowering cherry tree.

In tonight's Channel 4 programme *Mad About Machines*, a man whose hobby is collecting lawnmowers will have his eccentric interest exposed to the world. Having 34 lawnmowers may seem a harmless enough enthusiasm, no more reprehensible than collecting military prints. But unlike the prints, lawnmowers pollute the atmosphere as effectively as they shatter the silence of the countryside.

At a recent lecture given to city planners and doctors in London, an expert on clean air said that a mower emits as much in the way of airborne pollutants as 30 average family cars.

Air pollution, whether from petrol or diesel engines, according to the National Asthma Campaign, trigger an attack in many susceptible patients, although there is no evidence to prove that it actually causes the problem in someone who does not already have asthma.

Research in Birmingham has revealed that the closer children live to a main road, the more likely they are to suffer from chest troubles.

Airways of those with asthma are particularly sensitive. Engines — whether diesel or petrol and whether large as in a bus or small as in a mower — release nitrogen dioxide into the atmosphere. Nitrogen dioxide irritates the asthmatic's vulnerable airways and also has the power to make them more sensitive to other allergens such as household mites, pollen or flecks of skin from the coat of the family dog.

Nitrogen dioxide also renders asthmatic patients more likely to catch viral infections. Half of all the United Kingdom's emissions of nitrogen dioxide are accounted for by the exhaust from vehicles.

Nitrogen dioxide is only one of many pollutants produced by engines. All of them spew out little pieces of dust and dirt, known as particulate matter, which are small enough to be inhaled into the

deepest parts of the lungs. The particulate matter combines with sulphur dioxide, another pollutant, to form a highly irritant substance which is harmful to any patient who has chest troubles.

Statistics published in 1993 from six American cities showed that there is a close association between mortality and the concentration of particulates in the atmosphere.

Nitrous dioxide and sulphur dioxide particulates are only some of the pollutants emitted by cars, buses, and lawnmowers. Carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds, hydrocarbons such as benzene, butadiene and methane are also produced. About two thirds of these hydrocarbons in the atmosphere come from the exhaust of engines, and a third from the evaporation of the fuel.

Exhaust fumes also contribute to the concentration of ozone at ground level. Ozone is an oxidising agent which at high levels causes permanent damage to vulnerable airways, and at lower levels increases their sensitivity to antigens which cause asthma.

There is nothing more pleasing to the eye than a well-cut lawn. But these delights could be gained without polluting the atmosphere if mower engines and those driving chainsaws or weed trimmers were fitted with appropriate catalysers. Environmentally friendly ones are available and are manufactured by a company called Husqvarna.

On a grander scale, automotive emission systems are readily available which reduce exhaust emissions in cars by 95 per cent. Others are in trials which, it is hoped, will reduce them by nearly 100 per cent. By using the appropriate converter, it is now possible to reduce exhaust from diesel buses and lorries by more than 60 per cent, and their nauseous black smoke by 90 per cent. These converters also increase fuel efficiency by more than 7 per cent.

The tragedy is that, as yet, the British Government's proposals which would make lawnmowing or motorway driving less destructive to people with chest complaints are very weak.

'Mowers emit as much pollution as 30 cars'

Beware the barman with a flame-thrower

IN SOME rather pretentious bars it's still not unusual to see drinks, such as sambuca, being served alight, with a blue flame, like that on a Christmas pudding, licking around the top of the glass. Attractive as the custom may be, the drinker always has the sneaking fear that the alcohol is being wasted by being burnt off, but few people realise that it can also represent a health hazard.

The *Journal The American Surgeon* has reported on three cases in which the action of the kindly waiter when he topped up the glass converted the bottle he was holding into a flame-thrower.

The flame-thrower, naturally enough, was pointing in the direction of his customer and, in all three cases, the burns suffered by people who

had been hoping to enjoy a quiet evening were severe. The burns are likely to be particularly cruel as they will probably involve the face and hands.

The Americans, always inventive, have designed a gauze protector which can be fitted to the bottle so that pouring a generous portion will not turn the dinner table into the replica of a war zone.

In the pink after the post-natal blues

NEARLY one woman in seven has a moderate degree of post-natal depression after child-bearing. The standard treatment is an antidepressant coupled with tender, loving care from the doctor and health visitor. A trial published in *The Lancet* last year showed that oestrogen supplements helped; an earlier one demonstrated that increased support from specially trained health visitors was effective.

A survey by Professor Louis Appleby, with his team from

Manchester, has been reported in the *British Medical Journal*. The researchers compared Prozac fluoxetine (an antidepressant) with cognitive behavioural therapy in the treatment of non-psychotic post-natal depression. Both treatments were effective, but no advantage was obtained by using them simultaneously. In many cases there is a great improvement in mood within a week.

The conclusion was that the preferred treatment might be for the mother to have one cognitive behavioural treatment session followed by the fluoxetine; and no further counselling. For those who have a strong dislike of pills, six sessions of therapy is as likely to be effective as the antidepressants.

Debris in the elbow joint

TIM HENMAN has had arthroscopic surgery to remove debris from his elbow. It is reported that the operation has been a success, and it is expected that he will be playing within six weeks.

Henman is famously dedicated to the game and has already risen above other more serious physical problems such as osteochondritis, to reach his present place on the world stage, but this is a severe setback.

Hoovering up the bits and pieces, which accumulate in a damaged joint, is becoming a well known use for arthroscopic surgery but the most important question is always why they gathered in the joint in the first place. The obvious second question is that if the conditions within the joint had been favourable to the accumulation of debris in the past, what treatment was going to be introduced which could prevent a recurrence of the trouble in the future.



Tim Henman: famously dedicated to the game

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السلامة

In their search for catwalk cachet, fashion designers are plundering the aristocracy to find the right breed of supermodel. Grace Bradberry reports

The fashion world's ardour for aristocratic models shows no signs of fading. Attitude is what designers are after, and they have decided that it is most reliably to be found in the pages of *Debut*'s Peerage.

The big four are Stella Tennant, granddaughter of the Duchess of Devonshire and hence a Mitford; Iris Palmer, daughter of Sir Mark Palmer, the gypsy baronet, and Lady Catherine Palmer, the younger sister of Lord Glenconner; Honor Fraser, the sister of Lord Lovat, head of the Fraser clan; and, lower down the modelling hierarchy, a newcomer, Jasmine Guinness, great-granddaughter of Diana Mosley, née Mitford.

What these girls get up to is the talk of the modelling world, just as gossip about Naomi, Kate and Helena dominated the early part of the decade. Only this week Honor Fraser had the fashion crowd dashing for their mobiles when it was announced that she had left Storm, the agency that helped to propel her to stardom, and signed with Select, which represents Stella Tennant.

On Tuesday, Storm issued a statement with the tantalising line: "Directors felt a time for change had arrived that would be mutually beneficial to both parties." One suspects that there must have been unpleasantness for Storm to view the departure of a high-earning model as "beneficial". Select is saying little, and Honor is in Japan, shooting an advertising campaign for Comme des Garçons. Industry insiders, however, say that Honor had become increasingly unhappy at being pigeon-holed as a demure English rose (as opposed, presumably, to a more spiky Scottish thistle). The really big-money contracts — Chanel, Armani, Jil Sander — were going to pricklier girls such as Stella.

Honor has a steely determination to make money. When her father died in 1994, her brother inherited a cottage on the Inverness-shire estate and a £7 million debt. Honor is aware that the name Fraser has cachet but little cash attached and has declared: "I'm in modelling because I want to make lots of money."

What Honor knows, and what Jasmine is discovering, is that it is not enough to be tall, aristocratic and striking. You have to have your own market niche. Honor, Stella and Iris are only alike in pedigree. Each has a very different style both in front of, and away from, the camera.

On the catwalk, Honor's

haughty look and horse-like leg movements infuriate on-lookers. But off it, she is all self-effacing charm, an expert networker with a weather eye on the next job. Stella Tennant, the most successful of all, was a punk princess with a nose ring when she was first "discovered" by Isabella Blow, the eccentric and well-connected *Vogue* stylist. Cold and uncommunicative on the catwalk, her reputation off it is as something of an inverted snob.

The last of the triumvirate, Iris Palmer, exudes moneyed bohemianism — not to mention a very boishie catwalk attitude. She has a tendency to treat shoots as a bit of lark, and one stylist recalls her arriving two hours late. If any of them gives the impression of being a wild child, it is Iris. Jasmine's "attitude" is as yet undefined. At castings she not

U- photographers heckled from the back. Still less can one picture Jasmine's great-grandmother, Diana, the most beautiful of the Mitford sisters — and arguably the most controversial — submitting herself to the gaze of the fashion horde. The third daughter of the eccentric Baron Redesdale, she was described by James Lees-Milne, a family friend, as "the most divine adolescent — a goddess, more immaculate, more celestial than Botticelli's Venus".

At the age of 18, she married Bryan Guinness, later Lord Moyne, for whom she bore two sons, Jonathan and Desmond (Jasmine's grandfather, and the founder of the Irish Georgian Society). But though as a couple they had huge social glamour — enhanced still further when their friend Evelyn Waugh dedicated his first novel, *Vile Bodies*, to them — Diana found Bryan dull. In 1932, she fell in love with Sir Oswald Mosley, then married, and to the horror of her family, she left her husband for Sir Oswald, marrying him in Berlin in 1936 in a ceremony attended by Hitler. (Cimmie Oswald's wife, had died in 1933.)

Oswald and Diana were interned during the war. Sir Oswald died in 1980, and Lady Mosley lives in Orsay, outside Paris, effectively as an exile. She is still reviled in some quarters, not least because she will keep insisting that Hitler was an interesting man to know.

Successing generations have been less controversial, but their private lives have followed a similarly bumpy path. Her late grandmother, Marie-Gabrielle von Urach of Württemberg, was divorced from her grandfather in 1981, and her own parents, Liz Casey and Patrick Guinness, are also divorced. Jasmine grew up at Leixlip Castle, the home of her grandfather Desmond.

There is a tendency among bright young things with famous names to try to distance themselves from the family legacy. Either they insist that it has not given them a leg up, or they try to dissociate themselves from elements of the family's past. Even Stella Tennant, who is generally proud to be a Mitford, has occasionally felt obliged to disavow the snobism of her great-aunt Nancy's novels.

Jasmine is unusual in that she seems to embrace the legacy. In Paris she stayed with her aunt Charlotte Mosley, editor of the recent edition of letters between Evelyn

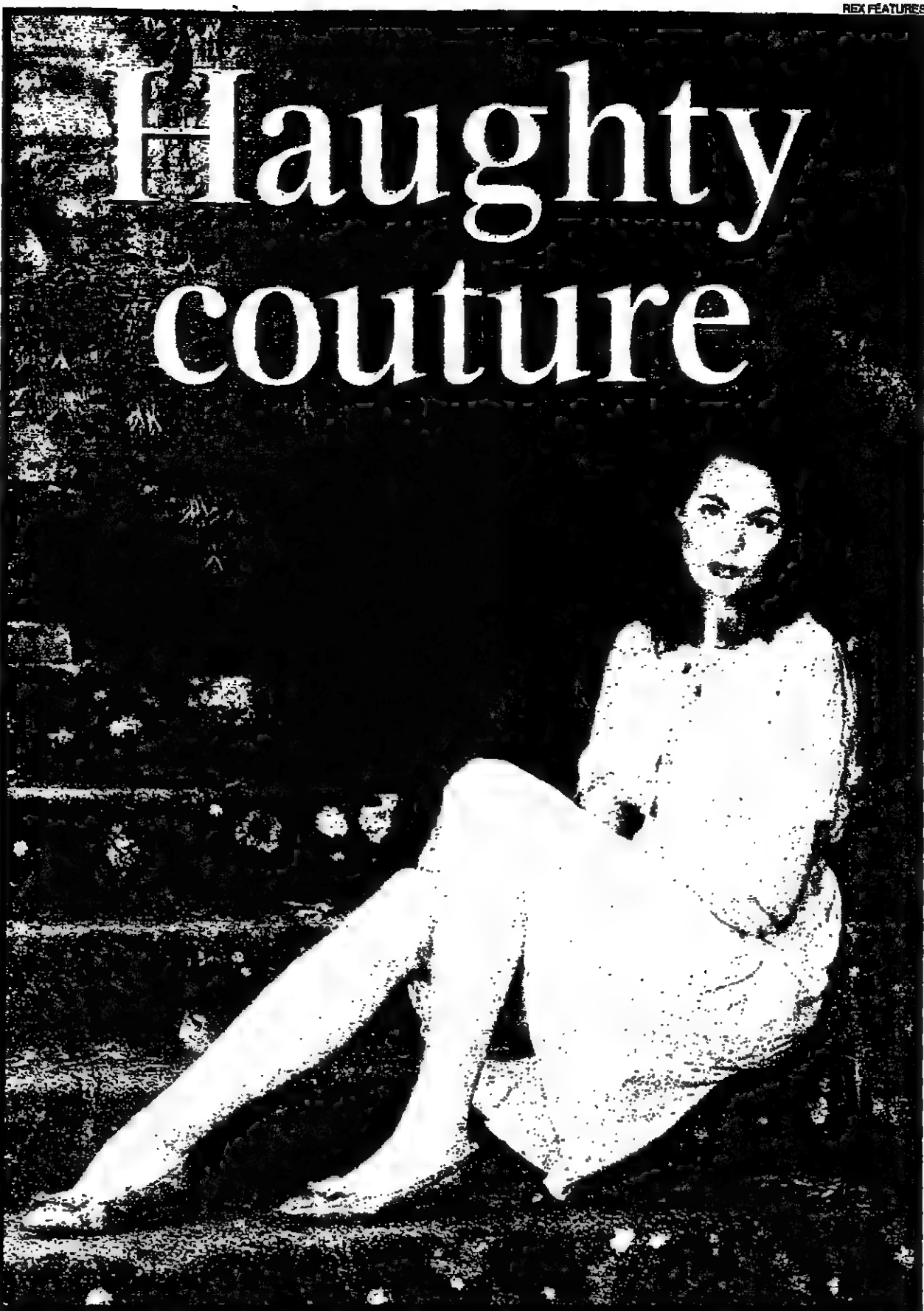
The more disdain these girls show the higher their value will go

only eschews aristocratic hauteur, but also the more widespread modelling *froideur*, chatting away with little apparent awareness of the fashion world's convention that models should say little and remain aloof.

She could be seen at the last Chanel ready-to-wear show — her first in Paris — a few paces behind Stella Tennant, but though both have the big Mitford eyes, the similarity ends there. Until Philip Treacy's London show in February, they had not even met. "We're second cousins twice removed or something very obscure," says Jasmine.

They have not become bosom friends — the modelling world has a strict hierarchy and she is still making her way through the foothills.

Nevertheless, 20-year-old Jasmine's arrival amounts to a trend among Mitfords — and a curious one at that, when one considers that Jessica, Diana, Debo et al were famously outspoken. It is difficult to imagine Nancy Mitford, say, gliding down the catwalk in a pair of big knickers, uttering not a word as "Non-



Poise and pedigree: Jasmine Guinness, the newcomer on the catwalk, and, bottom right, Honor Fraser, who has just signed with Select

Waugh and Nancy Mitford. Jasmine would also rather spend time with her aunt and uncle than visit model haunts in the evening: "They're very kind, and I'm usually just too tired to go out."

A more general ennui appears to be built into Jasmine's character. Asked by *Hello!* magazine whether she might not be simply a wild child dabbling in fashion, she replied wearily: "Listen, compared to my family, I'm

straight. What could I do to rebel? They've done everything."

It is not surprising then that she has found a kindred spirit in a scion of the rock aristocracy, Jesse James Wood, son of Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones, and also a musician. When Jasmine is in London, they share a house in Richmond, wallowing in premature domestic bliss.

There is a lot to live up to — and to live down. Jasmine,

however, seems sanguine about her great-grandmother's invidious reputation and expresses nothing but admiration: "She's very interesting, a real character — so elegant, always immaculate. She's a real inspiration to me. She's an amazingly dressed woman, very stylish, and still very beautiful."

From her parents, she inherited a certain bohemian style: "They weren't so much glamorous as very cool."

But she is in London less and less as her career begins to take off. She first modelled at the age of ten, when her uncle Perry Oden photographed her for a Laura Ashley advertising campaign. Then, in 1994, during her final year as a boarder at St Columba's College, Dublin, she signed to Eddie Shanahan's agency in Ireland. There followed a one-year stint at Winchester College of Art, but she left, homesick for Ireland. Soon



Wild child: Iris Palmer



Cold: Stella Tennant



afterwards she signed to Models 1.

It is unlikely she will cause a *grand scandale* in the way her great-grandmother did. These days it is harder to shock, and she will be flogging her social pedigree and inherited beauty — the equivalent of the family silver — in a highly competitive marketplace.

If her fellow *Debut* girls are anything to go by, the more disdain she displays, the higher her value will rise.

Carving a career out of murder, betrayal and adultery

Susan Isaacs's first book had all the luck a debut novel could have, from being chosen by Book of the Month Club to a film deal within days of publication. Interview by Bronwen Maddox

On a Thursday afternoon, Susan Isaacs and her husband, Elkan Abramowitz, a high-profile Manhattan lawyer, are preparing to be actors in a murder mystery weekend a few hours from their Long Island home. In the drama, which other guests will attempt to solve, she will don an old mackintosh to play an FBI agent. He is about to comb the house for beads and a peace-symbol T-shirt to play a radical left-wing lawyer.

Both hasten to say that the weekend is just a bit of fun with friends in a beautiful retreat in the hills. But for Isaacs, deception and mystery are also the subject of her daily life. She has made her name as one of America's most popular novelists through her insight into betrayal, adultery, and the tensions under the surface of apparently happy families.

Her seventh novel, *Lily White*, published in Britain today and soon to be made into a film, is a detective story, like many of her previous books. But in contrast to writers who simply spin an elaborate puzzle, she makes murder a believable part of ordinary lives.

The heroine, Lee White, a criminal lawyer, is battling to defend a man who tricks women out of their savings by promising marriage, and who is accused of murdering his latest victim. That story is interlarded with the tale of Lee's escape from her lower middle-class, Jewish family into the apparent haven of marriage to a handsome, charming son of old-money Establishment. She uncovers the truth about her client at the

same time as the reality of her marriage and family is thrust upon her.

The tale is threaded with the satirical observation, particularly of women's small deceptions, that has made Isaacs's reputation. "From the waist down, she was heavy, bell-bottomed, like an accessory made for a boat, weighted not to tip over in rough weather. Thus shaped, she had wrapped a giant chiffon scarf around the waist of her bathing suit, but a random breeze had uncovered a hefty hip and a huge, dimpled thigh."

But although Isaacs credits Lee with her own ability to see through such ruses, her moral is that common sense and self-knowledge do not guarantee a happy life. People take for granted the bonds of family, marriage, children and work at their peril.

As they take for granted social status. One of the themes is the bewilderment of Anglo-Saxon Protestants as they are eclipsed by more vigorous ethnic groups, their mansions crumbling as the trust funds dwindle. She observes: "Lee, who had been raised to revere the upper-class god of genteel shabbiness, could not stop herself from noting that there was a profound difference between a threadbare Chippendale settee and a toilet dripping brown water on to a rust stain that had eaten through the tile floor."

Above all, though, her tale is about the



Susan Isaacs makes murder a believable part of otherwise ordinary lives

betrayal felt by women who grew up expecting their lives to model the experience of their parents and who find that their dream of a *Fifties*-style marriage to one partner, forever, is an illusion.

"In the last quarter of a century there has been a revolution in women's lives, and part of the price of freedom is pain, not getting what you want or expect," she says. "It means not putting up with a miserable marriage, with things that

restrict you emotionally, but it may also mean giving up the old idea of true love."

British publishers have tended to market her in the romantic novel category. "Like a cerebral Judith Krantz," she says. But her themes — and the detail of her observations — have more in common with Joanna Trollope: women stepping aside from the certainties and claustrophobia of family life, in return for a freer but unpredictable future.

Her perceptiveness in handling these subjects does not spring from a precarious personal life. Now 53, she has been married for 28 years. "Watching men my age go off with women in their twenties or thirties, or even forties, you'd be a fool not to ask 'can this happen to me?' But the truth is we have a lovely marriage. He has never not interested me. He is intelligent, he doesn't accept the conventional wisdom, he is analytical, kind, funny. I really lucked out."

Abramowitz has represented Woody Allen in his battle with Mia Farrow, and echoes of that warfare flicker through the book. Isaacs says: "I certainly did not do it consciously, but life intrudes. The pain of losing a child is so overwhelming."

She will not discuss how much she earns, saying only: "It's very nice for a lawyer's wife." Their pillared, red-brick house is in Port Washington, one of the more comfortable towns within commuting range of Manhattan; they also have a small house on Long Island.

But Isaacs seems surprised at the reliability of her domestic pleasures. She admits to a fear that it will be taken away, and says her feeling of being an outsider, "always expecting to be thrown out", is behind her desire to write fiction.

Isaacs did not set out to be a writer: "I

wasn't one of those exquisitely sensitive children who kept a journal and recorded every thought. My only thought for the future was hopefully one day someone would want to marry me. But actually in college no one did, so I had to get a job."

The job, which she loved immediately, was at *Seventeen* magazine. After her marriage, she experimented with speech-writing for local Democrats. But it was not until her mid-thirties, when her children were three and six, that she finally embarked on her first novel, after a year of seizing any domestic diversion to avoid the task. "I decorated lampshades, made puff pastry; no matter what we had, it had to be *en cuisine*."

As she puts it: "Compromising Positions" had all the luck a first novel could have. "It was chosen by Book of the Month Club, leading within days to a film deal; each of the following books has also been a bestseller in the United States."

For her next novel, she is departing from the detective format. "I want to show two really fine Americans, as good as this country can turn out, and try to describe what sets us apart from other countries," she says.

Those are grand themes, but in a sense, Isaacs has already found one answer: optimism in the face of uncertainty. Once you break the pattern you expected your life to follow "you may not live happily ever after," she says. But by accepting something different, she argues, "you can still live contentedly ever after."

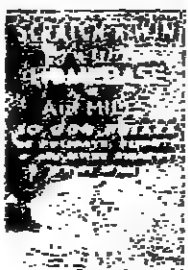
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Why Scots Tories won't conform

Magnus Linklater says the party is in open rebellion

John Major ventures north today to find as strange an electoral landscape as we have seen since 1979. Nothing in Scotland is quite as it should be, and the opinion polls reflect the general bewilderment: one, published yesterday in the *Herald*, shows the Tories, mired in sleaze, plunging to one of their lowest ratings ever — 12 per cent. The other, in *The Scotsman*, has them unaffected by the mud-slinging, and even regaining lost ground — up to 22 per cent. Both cannot be right, and though one explanation is that the latter has been adjusted to take account of anti-Tory bias, while the former is notoriously volatile, there is evidence of severe election-strain.

Here is the anomaly: Scottish Labour, once the most robustly independent of all the party's fiefdoms, is now immaculately disciplined, firmly controlled from headquarters, politically correct in organisation and policy. The Scottish Conservative Party, once the creature of Central Office, is in a state of rebellion. Having engineered the resignation of its chairman, Sir Michael Hirst, a group of its more intransigent members has shown its muscle, and could yet wreak more havoc. These disaffected Tories want a larger say in their own affairs, more autonomy, more power — a bit like Scotland itself.

Mr Major would be well advised to find out what is going on. Last time, the Tories in Scotland were so clearly at loggerheads, in 1990, the present Secretary of State, Michael Forsyth, a convinced Thatcherite, was forced to stand down as party chairman. Those events presaged the demise of Margaret Thatcher herself. Some of the ferocity of that extraordinary period, when the then Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, representing the centre of the party, found himself being undermined by the right-wing Forsyth camp, can be seen in the present strummings. Things are different in scale this time around, but equally hazardous. Then, it was the Tory grassroots organisation that turned en masse against a chairman they regarded as too radical. This time, it is a small but dangerous minority that has rebelled against the hierarchy. Sir Michael stood for the status quo, the hold-steady tendency which believes in playing safe. He owed his appointment to John Major, and his loyalty earned him a knighthood. But it was that loyalty and that ambition which made him so greatly disliked: his opponents were seething with dissent, and there may be more sleaze to come. But more important than the gossip and innuendo will be how the party handles itself over the next three weeks. All is not yet lost. If it can demonstrate the strength of purpose it needs to confront its own dissidents, unite around a strongly Scottish agenda, and home in on the weaknesses of its opponents rather than its own, then it may find that 22 per cent is nearer the mark than 12.

He realises that unless they can promote themselves vigorously as a Scottish party rather than just a branch of the UK organisation, their stock will continue to fall — hence some of his more romantic ideas, such as returning the Stone of Destiny to Scotland and citing the Declaration of Arbroath in support of the Tory cause.

None of that will amount to much, however, if the rebels continue their destructive campaign. It would be ironic if Mr Forsyth himself were knocked off course by a splinter group within his own party. Once it was he who conspired the splinter.

Mr Major will have the chance to catch up on all this when he arrives in the Dumfries constituency today. The candidate there, Struan Stevenson, was once a convinced devolutionist. As such he was always on the fringes of the party, until a late conversion to Unionism won him the Dumfries nomination in succession to Sir Hector Monro. The message is clear: to make progress in the party, you need to conform. But Scotland is not a conforming kind of place, and it is precisely this kind of inflexibility that has lost the Tories support.

Rumours of more revelations still dog the Tories

They should be confident enough to tolerate debate instead of insisting that only the yes-men will find favour.

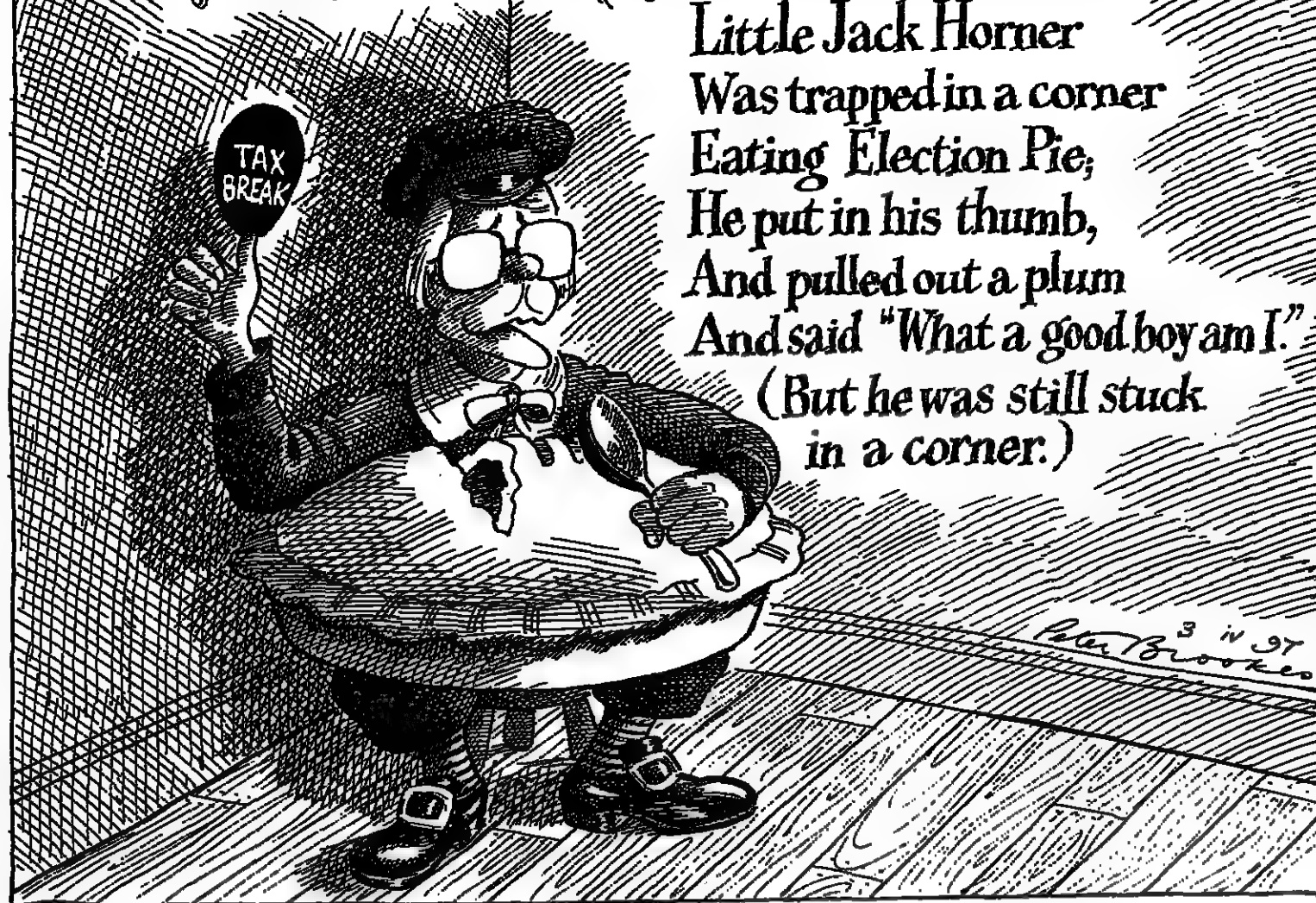
Labour, which unveils its own manifesto today, is not immune to similar charges. So far, the Tories support.

by contrast with the Tories, it has had an easy ride, and its standing in both polls demonstrates the strength of its position. At 53 per cent in one and 47 in the other, it can afford to gloat quietly. But it too will need to watch its back after some fairly ruthless power-play from the new Labour faction which stitched up the recent elections to its party executive in Scotland, ensuring that the Blair tendency now dominates the organisation. There are some bruises here as well, which could spell trouble later.

The struggling parties are the Nationalists and the Liberal Democrats. For all of its bravado, the SNP desperately needs a big break if it is to advance much beyond its present standing. And the Liberal Democrats, who traditionally punch above their weight in Scotland when it comes to representation at Westminster, really do look squeezed this time around.

All eyes, however, are still on the Scottish Tories. Rumours of further revelations continue to dog them, and there may be more sleaze to come. But more important than the gossip and innuendo will be how the party handles itself over the next three weeks. All is not yet lost. If it can demonstrate the strength of purpose it needs to confront its own dissidents, unite around a strongly Scottish agenda, and home in on the weaknesses of its opponents rather than its own, then it may find that 22 per cent is nearer the mark than 12.

NURSERY RHYMES REVISITED



Little Jack Horner
Was trapped in a corner
Eating Election Pie,
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum
And said "What a good boy am I."
(But he was still stuck in a corner.)

Is it Major's manifesto?

Kenneth Clarke has influenced the text for the worse, but the Prime Minister's placatory tones can also be heard

If it is expected to win the general election, I do not think the Conservative manifesto will succeed. As I read it, I tried to put myself into the mind of a floating voter who was thinking of switching to new Labour. Would such a voter be likely to be persuaded by this manifesto to return to voting Conservative? I did find some persuasive themes, but on the whole I felt that an intention to vote Labour would not be changed. What this manifesto will do is reinforce any intention to vote Conservative that already exists. For the 30 per cent of the electorate who were already pretty certain to vote Conservative, it will be a largely reassuring document. Its title says "You can only be sure with the Conservatives". If you already are a Conservative, that must be true, though it does remind one of Stanley Baldwin's 1929 election slogan of "Safety First". In 1929 the Conservatives lost.

The worst sections are those on Europe and the constitution, as one might have feared. The Conservatives have stuck loyally to their wet compromise on the single currency. "We believe it is in our national interest to keep our options open to take a decision on a single currency when all the facts are before us. If a single currency is created, without sustainable convergence, a British Conservative Government will not be part of it. If, during the course of the next Parliament, a Conservative Party were to conclude that it was in our national interest to join a single currency, we have given a guarantee that no such decision would be implemented unless the British people gave their express approval in a referendum." That is indeed "letting I dare not wait upon 'I would, like the poor cat in the adage". On Europe this is a poor cat of a manifesto.

The constitutional section is even worse when it comes to the section on Parliament. There the manifesto moves from mere indecision to the assertion of falsehood. "Parliament — alongside the Crown and the legal system — is one of the three key institutions that uphold our constitution. The supremacy of Parliament is fundamental to our democracy, and the guarantee of our freedoms. The last 17 years have seen many changes to strengthen Parliament and make it more effective..." The last 17 years,

and particularly the last five, have seen a massive transfer of power from Parliament to the European Union; the single currency, which the manifesto suggests could be "in our national interest..." when all the facts are before us" would take monetary policy, exchange policy, and a large part of budgetary policy away from Government.

If the Conservatives believe that "the supremacy of Parliament is fundamental to democracy, and the guarantee of our freedoms," they should not have signed or enacted the Treaty of Maastricht, and they should not continue to keep open the single currency question. It is true that Labour policy is somewhat worse, and that Liberal Democrat policy is worse even than that of Labour, but there will be honest, old-fashioned, democratic Conservatives who, if they reach page 49, will be so sickened by the hypocrisy of this paragraph that they will be tempted to go and vote for the Referendum Party.

These are the worst depths of the manifesto. The rest of it contains nothing half so offensive and a great deal that most people would regard as reasonable and desirable. The economic section leans over, as Conservative manifestos used to do in the 1950s, in the direction of tax cuts which will affect the largest possible number of voters. The standard rate of income tax will be brought down, if possible, to 20p; the marginal rate will not be similarly reduced, though it will not actually be raised above 40p. There will, by the end of the next Parliament, be a lot of people who have risen into the top bracket for tax. The bottom layers of 40p taxpayers are not particularly rich, and the Conservatives do not propose any benefit for them.

The pledge that "we will continue

to reduce the burden of capital gains tax and inheritance tax as it is prudent to do so" is also minimalist in character. One does not have to believe in Reaganomics to see that a 40 per cent capital gains tax, the highest in the world, is well above the level which would produce the most revenue. The Conservatives profess to be the party of small business, of property-owning democracy and of wider share-ownership, yet the rate of capital gains tax is higher than it was when they came to office in 1979.

What one does see in this manifesto is the gravitational pull of a powerful political planet. This planet is anti-Thatcherite both on Europe and on economic policy. It is not really a Conservative planet at all. It shares with the Labour Party the underlying assumption that taxes can effectively be used to reduce inequalities of income, and that the single currency is either desirable in itself or might at least be a price worth paying. No one doubts the name of this big planet: the Jupiter of the Tory sky is Kenneth Clarke.

There is, however, a quieter and less threatening voice which has also influenced the manifesto, and might have done better to dominate it. That is the voice of John Major himself. Sometimes one suddenly finds oneself warming to the Prime Minister: I can well understand why old and loyal Tories love him. Who but he would publish a manifesto with this quirky pledge in bold italic sans-serif type: "We will require all government agencies to apply for chartersmarks?"

Yet running through the manifesto there is a coherent John Major policy. I have no doubt he believes in it. On each of the key issues of social policy, he wants to move towards what the manifesto calls "greater self-govern-

ance". He wants "all schools to take full responsibility for the management of their own affairs"; his vision of the National Health Service "is one in which hospitals and family doctors gain greater power to run their own affairs"; he wants the young to build themselves better pensions; he wants to "shift power and wealth back to working families and away from the State".

These proposed transfers of power from the State to the individual or the local provider seem to be the heart of the manifesto, and they are no doubt the heart of John Major's personal political philosophy. If he had called the manifesto "Give power back to the people", he would have made the point clearer, but it is clear enough. The Labour Party is in favour of some devolution of power, in Scotland, Wales and local government, but it is opposed to independent school management, to fundholding GPs, to big cuts in family taxation, and, so far as one can make out, to Peter Lilley's admirable pension proposals as well.

Both major parties claim to want to transfer power from the State: both see themselves as anti-centralist. But the Conservative manifesto goes much further towards the individual, and the local, and Labour tends to transfer power inside what are still very big administrative structures. Those who believe that "small is beautiful" will be attracted by John Major's social policies. There is even a pledge to give "more power to parish councils".

This has been a strange administration, sometimes too limited in its ideas, sometimes recovering from unforced errors. Perhaps one can make one judgment of this manifesto. Leaving aside Europe — and I do not really believe John Major would take Britain into the single currency in the next Parliament — this is a wholly unthreatening document. If the Conservatives were to be re-elected, they would be committed to a certain kind of jog-trot good government, inspired by John Major's respect for individual decision-making, which the British would probably appreciate if they came to experience it. If I were to decide the awards, I would be happy to give the manifesto at least 65 chartersmarks. If only I knew what they were. It leaves the somewhat melancholy feeling that we could do a lot worse, and that we probably shall.

William Rees-Mogg

Open the book of summer

Quentin Letts on the herald of a season's sport

To each race belongs its own sure sign of spring. Roughly around this time of year the eskimo will emerge from hibernation, take a squint at the watery sun, and realise that the igloo has begun to melt. In the African veld, the ruddy-faced pioneer lifts a flicked finger to the easterly trade wind and discerns that heck, man, the savanna scrubs are sproutin', while in distant Ecuador the Oriente's humidity starts to rise, a jaguar yawns, sweet song birds hasten north.

In England, summer's approach is signalled by a flash of yellow in the long grasses. This is not the long-necked rise of the daffodil, nor the glimpse of a scouting bumble bee, evocative though his buzzing can be. Spring's yellow vest is worn, instead, by *Wisden*, the cricketers' almanack and herald of a season's sport. The 1997 edition, with its trademark yellow cover, is published today, and will be greeted across the country as proof that winter has passed.

It is so much more than the dry publication of a book of facts and figures. When you first open a new hardback *Wisden*, there is that soft creak of the spine which matches the sound of ancient cricket boots under the turn of an eager heel in the April nets. It is, furthermore, the creak that will be heard from numerous knees when the more advanced members of the village XI, with a tug on their flannels and a rub of leathery palms, crouch down for the first time in the slips on the opening day of the season.

A familiar whiff borne by the Easter breeze? Ahhh, linseed oil, used to season the willow of the bat. The rituals of preparation for cricket open slowly, like petals on a hesitant tulip. First comes the rumble of the lawnmower on the square, with certain regional variations. (*Wisden* reports that at a leading cricket ground in Ethiopia the outfield is trimmed by a groundsman with a sickle, who takes away the grass clippings in a sack to feed to his donkey.) Cutting complete, there follows the squeak of the lime-whitewash barrow, which marks out the wicket, accompanied by the muttered groans of the ground-staff as they bend to measure the popping crease. Then it is the crunch of studs on pavilion floors, the sleigh-bell tinkles as fumbling fingers jingle pad straps, and the hollow clacking of a ball being bounced up and down on the driving spot of a trusty Gunn & Moore.

From Cumberland to Cornwall, there will be saloons as teammates spy each other for the first time since September and sympathetic laughter as the stretching powers of club colours are tested on windy "two-sweater days" at country grounds. At Hutton Cranswick, Yorkshire, Purdey the golden retriever will be back on duty, running after well-thrashed balls. Last season he found 50 lost balls, and was quite properly made a club vice-president of the club.

These are not just preparations for the great contest. England is limbering up for her summer months, with their promise of Pinus-davoured afternoons in dappled shade. If you are not sated by the prospect of the Saturday of the Lord's Test (Australia this year) or the glories of watching Gloucestershire at Cheltenham's festive College Ground — flowers Ale and thick-wedge cheese and Marmite sandwiches for tea — then savour the calendar of alternatives: horsey Hickstead in late May, with its braying girls and spanking-tight jodhpurs. Or for a different class of trouser, the musty curdureys at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Or savour the gay ribbons of the Henley Royal Regatta at the prow of July, or Jolly Coves Week, with its gusts of ginny zest. It all stretches before us, with the Braemar Highland Games in September so far away that the caber seems no bigger than a toothpick.

For the ex-pat, these can be difficult days. From New York, for instance, I write in the spirit of the Dickensian urchin pressing his nose against the sweet-shop window, looking in wistfully. We hear that you have had warm weather, that the deckchairs have been de-colonised and that the wild garlic is coming. One tries to explain these delights to the foreign mind, but one fails. The pleasures of wasps in your cider, of cold collation lunchtimes and Bransford Pickle baps are tougher to translate than the baric scenes in Herodotus. The snap-quick mind of the New Yorker struggles to comprehend the attraction of Morecambe Bay sand-between the toes and Harrogate coffee-shop small talk or a wet June day under the garden fere marquee.

Wisden recalls the struggle faced by Philip Halden, the British businessman kidnapped in Colombia who was held in the jungle by guerrillas for eight months and tried to reach his captors the noble game. Doughtily he wielded a machete to carve a bat and wooden balls. He introduced the desperadoes to the concept of the googly, the despair of the no-ball, the ecstasy of the lofted six. They tried, he tried, how they all tried. But when, by chance, the home-made bat snapped one day, the hostage-takers had to confess to their captive that, sorry, señor, they preferred soccer. The heroic Halden was not encouraged to carve another club.

Rejoice, for cricket is back, and the English summer has arrived. But keep it to yourselves. No one else will understand.

P-H-S

Mayhem

DRUNKEN students are the talk of Oxford Town Hall, where the election office is briefing its staff on how to keep the mayhem of May Day celebrations away from the polling booths.

For most Oxford residents under the age of 25, May 1 is a day of drunken debauchery. Pubs open before it is light and a good proportion of the town has been up all night toasting the beginning of summer.

Never before has a general election been called on May 1 precisely, and unfortunately for the election office, polling booths will open at 7am — just as the students reach their zenith.

"We almost wrote to John Major begging him not to hold the election on May 1," says Roy Boyland, Oxford's elections officer. "Presiding officers have been made aware of the potential problems of high finks. They have been told that if a person should appear not to be in a fit state, he should be refused a ballot paper."

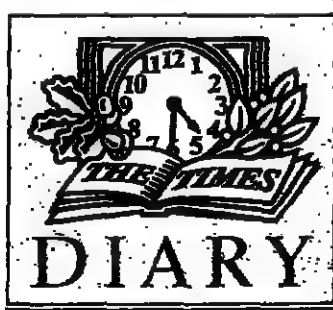
One flashpoint is likely to be the polling booth for Oxford Central, which stands, unhappily, next to The Bear pub — one of the city's most popular institutions. Another will be the St Clement's ward

booth, just a few yards from Magdalen Bridge. In Oxford, the May dawn breaks to the mellifluous sound of Magdalen College choir on top of the tower, and is followed by a riot of students jumping off the bridge into the murky Cherwell.

● Larry Adler, the 83-year-old harmonica player, suffered a setback on his present tour of Australia



Young Oxford voter



when he unpacked his bags on arrival and discovered he had left his harmonica behind in England. After a frantic phone call, the instruments were sent super-express, and reached him just before he set foot on stage. Fortunately, the old boy did not forget his heart pills.

Clocking off

FROM next weekend, Parisians will be only too aware of the approach of the millennium. On Saturday at midnight, exactly 1,000 days before 2000 begins, a giant illuminated clock adorning the Eiffel Tower will be switched on by the Mayor, Jean Tiberi.

The installation is 100ft across and 35ft high, weighs 50 tons and took 9,000 man-hours to construct. It will count down the days until the mother of all new year cele-

brations, while at the same time offering consolation to those lamenting the disappearance of the city's other millenium clock, the Césarion. This was a hi-tech device which counted the seconds until the year 2000 at the Pompidou Centre, before it was removed and put in storage recently while the crumbling museum undergoes renovation.

Steer clear

WHILE Labour Party managers borrow flashy sports cars from nightclub owners to ferry around their high command, Lord Cranborne, the whisky-smooth Conservative patriarch, is providing some more old-fashioned transport for needy Tories.

Yesterday, Edward Vaizey — Ken Clarke lookalike and Tory candidate for Bristol East — hitched along to Cranborne Chase, where he took delivery of an admirably high Tory old Land Rover.

Eco trip

GREEN DRAGON, a group of 40 eco-activists all called Potato (who changed their names to evade the bailiffs), are planning to invade the grounds of Harewood in Leeds. These ideological cousins of the unwashed Swampy are whining

about plans to build a set for the soap-opera *Emmerdale* on the Harewood estate, formerly the property of Lord Harewood, the Queen's first cousin, and now owned by his son, David Lascelles. "We are baffled by these rumours," says a spokesman. "We are not building a bypass or a new runway — we plant trees at Harewood, we don't destroy them. Harewood works hard to protect the English countryside, and money from *Emmerdale* will fund further conservation." In short, come in nut-



"If we lose, it's about haves and have-nots: those who have seats in the Lords and those who haven't"

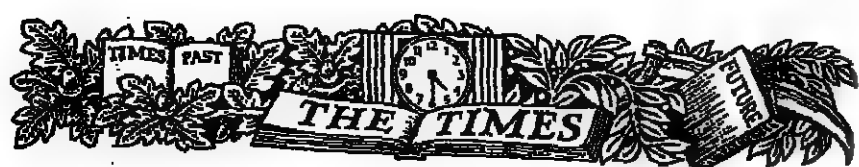
munchers, you're barking up the wrong tree.

● Yesterday out on the stump, David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, visited a McDonald's burger training camp in Manchester, where cameramen asked him to allow his guide-dog Lucy to gobble a Big Mac. "Lucy is on a strict vegetarian diet — twice a day — and a very healthy one too," he replied, quickly evading a John Gummer fiasco. "Perhaps McDonald's should open a new line for dogs."

And stinker

DOWN at the Fulton Fishmarket in New York these days, the mood is blacker than a shark's eyeball, after a spate of sackings due to alleged infiltration by organised crime. An unfortunate time, then, for the crew of the BBC's *Everyman* to start filming.

When the presenter, Anne MacGregor, arrived she was hit full in the face by a sea bass, dead and beginning to smelt. "It came as quite a shock," says Miss MacGregor. "It was probably an expression of the anger the sacked men's remaining colleagues felt." Probably.



MAJOR'S MANIFESTO

A cautious but coherent package from the Tories

With a picture of John Major on the cover and another on the first page, the Conservative manifesto published yesterday is an embodiment of the Prime Minister's personality and approach. It presents a more coherent package of ideas than its 1992 counterpart and its watchword is caution. If the Conservatives are re-elected, voters can expect a leisurely next five years with few truly radical policies and a modest amount of legislation.

Much of the manifesto is taken up with what the Tories will not do and with what they have already done. Keen to run on his record, Mr Major wastes no opportunities to remind readers of what his administration has achieved so far. In the style of Baldwin's 1929 "Safety First" campaign, the Prime Minister asks voters to elect him more on the basis of the past than the future. In 1929 Labour beat the Tories, and Baldwin's party lost 159 seats.

The themes of this year's manifesto are good ones. There is a welcome, if belated, conversion to the cause of supporting the family through the tax system. Transferable allowances for husbands or wives who stay at home to care for a child or relative are a good way of recognising the huge amount of unpaid work done within the family, often at some saving to the State.

The emphasis on independence rather than dependence — through policies on pensions, long-term care and savings — helps to address the problem of increasing insecurity brought by global competition and fast-changing technology. If voters cannot trust employers to give them a job for life or future governments to honour the pension promises of their predecessors, their best hope is for the State to make it easier for them to provide for themselves.

On Europe, the manifesto is still equivocal. The language has been hardened to

make the position look harder, but the changes are cosmetic. A promise not to include legislation on a single currency in the first Queen's Speech, for instance, does not necessarily preclude a new government joining EMU in the first wave. But it is encouraging to see that the Tories would actively try to prevent other countries going ahead in 1999 if the convergence criteria had not been safely met.

Neither here nor in any other area apart from the constitution have the Conservatives created much clear blue water. Transferability of tax allowances is a policy that Labour could just as easily have proposed. The aspiration to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 20p can be set beside Labour's aim of a 10p starting rate. Indeed, many of the new policies here have been suggested by Labour, such as targets for school standards, speedier criminal justice for juveniles and an independent food safety body.

The Conservatives are also vulnerable to the criticisms that they make so often of Labour's plans. Where is the money going to come from? It is unrealistic to suppose that Mr Major's tax-cutting aspirations will be paid for from economic growth. More likely is that, as in the past, he will raise taxes elsewhere in order to finance cuts in the basic rate; or that he will have to reduce public spending further. If he intends to do the latter, he owes it to voters to spell out which areas will be hit by lower spending and what the effects on services will be.

For those of the electorate who have been impressed by the past five years of Conservative rule, this manifesto will provide reassurance: they are likely to see more of the same. But Mr Major has barely begun to persuade those who believe that it is time for a change. To judge by our MORI poll today, those who need persuading are still well in the ascendancy.

WASHINGTON RENDEZVOUS

Clinton can be the catalyst for renewed dialogue

Once again, the road to peace in the Middle East runs through Washington. Benjamin Netanyahu will meet President Clinton there on Monday. King Hussein held talks at the White House earlier this week. Yasser Arafat has also been a recent visitor.

It is the swiftly scheduled arrangement between Mr Clinton and Mr Netanyahu that has captured most attention. Some observers suggest it might lead to a new American initiative. Others believe that the President will take this opportunity to force concessions out of a reluctant Prime Minister. Neither suggestion is very practical nor especially desirable.

Mr Clinton's personal commitment to the region is beyond doubt. During his first term it was the sole foreign policy issue with which he was consistently absorbed. That interest has intensified since his re-election. His Administration has been intimately involved in the detail of Israeli-Palestinian deliberations. American investment in the peace process is such that it would be a diplomatic disaster for the President if a whole structure collapsed. That telling truth explains Mr Clinton's enthusiasm for further discussions with Mr Netanyahu despite scant evidence that he can produce substantial results.

Whatever the advance publicity, Monday's meeting is unlikely to be acrimonious. The President has an instinctive sympathy for Israel and knows that Congress will disown him if he singles out Mr Netanyahu for criticism. Furthermore, he cannot contest the Prime Minister's assertion that terrorism must be disowned as a political instrument. Nor can Mr Clinton insist that Israel cease its construction of the Har Homa settlement as there is no chance of the Prime Minister capitulating. Reasoned

persuasion rather than public rebukes will maximise what American influence exists.

In the very short term, Mr Clinton must use the power of his office to succeed where in his Easter endeavour, Dennis Ross, the State Department's troubleshooter, could not. Little progress should be expected until Mr Netanyahu and Mr Arafat resume direct negotiations. The United States can press them both to abandon preconditions and return to business. It can also remind all sides that symbolic gestures carry significant weight. The Americans also have the standing to sponsor a summit between Mr Netanyahu and King Hussein.

The wider and more perplexing issue is what the parties should talk about. Mr Netanyahu has proposed a dramatic "escape forward". This would pre-empt the existing Oslo formula by abandoning the planned intermediate phases and open a dialogue on the final package between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. American officials are excited but also concerned about the concept. On the one hand, it is the sort of bold step that would allow recent disagreements to be side-stepped and could radically change the entire atmosphere. On the other, it is not clear how matters could be rescued if those talks ended in failure.

American caution is understandable. Yet, the present Oslo timetable is so fragile and uncertain that it may prove impossible to follow. The realistic alternative to an escape forward is a cooling-off period not a swift return to the preceding format. Mr Clinton should now encourage Mr Netanyahu to outline the broad shape of his initial proposals if Mr Arafat and King Hussein accepted his invitation. That alone would justify their rendezvous in Washington.

THE LOO'S THE THING

Unless the playwright can protect his future fame

Councillors in North Yorkshire have voted for a last-minute reprieve for the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, the lone outpost of the performing arts in one of Britain's bluest seaside resorts. By inviting the theatre to apply for a £40,000 grant, the council has made available the minimum needed so that the theatre can qualify for a lottery capital enhancement grant of £175,000, without the combined sums, it would have been forced to close, a humiliation for the theatre that was expensively converted from a cinema and opened with civic pomp only a year ago.

Closure would have had national repercussions. For this provincial flagship of culture owes its existence, reputation and tourist attraction to Sir Alan Ayckbourn, Britain's most successful playwright, who has never forgotten the cradle of his drama career. All Sir Alan's plays — and he has written more than 50 — now have their premiere beside the North Sea. They bring to Scarborough the London critics, the buzz and the cash that is sorely needed to replace the dwindling receipts from holiday makers. Sir Alan has sunk some £416,000 of his not inconsiderable fortune into the theatre of which he is now a director, and believes it earns ten times the size of the town's £50,000 annual commitment.

Scarborough, however, is not wholly enthusiastic about the enterprise that puts it on the thespian map. Yorkshiremen are famously careful with their money and have

down-to-earth notions of civic comfort. The council believes its money would be better spent on retaining 22 public lavatories, insisting that voters would take a more practical interpretation than actors of Hamlet's much thanks for this relief.

Sir Alan is outraged at such philistinism. He could, however, provide a simple denouement to the long-running drama of the theatre's finances: he could pay the difference himself. For playwrights as prolific, and professional, as Sir Alan a life on the stage proves very lucrative. If he were to endow his theatre in the round with a little more of his own good fortune, the budgetary whodunnit, which may otherwise return like *The Mousetrap* season after season, would quickly reach the end of its run.

Artists have often had to pay a high price for public honour, especially if that honour is bestowed on them by themselves. Authors pay to have their *oeuvre* privately printed. Amateur conductors have hired the entire Albert Hall to demonstrate their prowess with the baton. Actors, it is true, may achieve such a reputation that their workplaces are named in their honour: the *Yvonne Arnaud* in Guildford, Ashcroft in Croydon and the *Gielgud* in the West End. But the *Saatchis*, *Guggenheims* and *Memphins* who found art galleries and music schools usually stump up a whacking sum. Sir Alan has suffered *A Chorus of Disapproval* over his theatre: he could, perhaps, contribute more than *A Word from Our Sponsor*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Investigating and judging the moral conduct of MPs

From Sir Edward du Cann

Sir, Amid the intense publicity given to allegations against Messrs Tim Smith, Neil Hamilton and others (MPs for a few days more) I feel that three points need to be taken into account.

1. Following the original cash-for-questions affair the Prime Minister established the Nolan Committee. This in turn led to the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Thus the machinery exists for investigating alleged corruption in Parliament, and the Prime Minister deserves credit for this.

2. Some of the evidence Sir Gordon Downey has received has been published — a clear contempt of Parliament. His conclusions, if he has reached them, are unknown. However, having worked with Sir Gordon for some years, when I was chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (1974-79) and of the Public Accounts Commission (1984-87), I have no doubt that his inquiry will have been thorough and accurate. The public can safely rely upon the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges to be made up of senior MPs in the new Parliament to do its duty — whether its majority is Labour or Conservative.

If any newly elected MP is judged to have behaved improperly he can be promptly disciplined, even expelled. Enough evidence has so far been published to show this as a probability. Meanwhile, any parliamentary candidate who does not give adequate weight to this probability will deserve extra opprobrium if he is elected and then disciplined.

3. The authorities should consider promptly whether criminal action should be taken against the offer of bribes to MPs, through which he sought to influence the parliamentary process. In one case, that of Mr Smith, both the recipient and the payer have admitted their actions. Thus there is surely enough *prima facie* evidence for action to be taken.

Mr Mohamed Al Fayed has already wasted parliamentary time and taxpayers' money by making a monstrous allegation against the Home Secretary which Sir Gordon has stated should be "authoritatively and

publicly dismissed" (report, March 7). Justice to be effective should be prompt. Action need not await the election of a new Parliament.

Yours faithfully,
EDWARD DU CANN,
Les Heritiers,
9 Queen Elizabeth II Street,
Alderney, Channel Islands.
April 1.

From Professor Patrick Minford

Sir, Mr Neil Hamilton, MP, argues (letter, March 29) that we should allow him to have a proper hearing. I agree. It would astonish me if a country famed for its pride in natural justice were to allow the hysteria and self-serving instincts rampant at election time to override this principle.

However, the logic of a proper election and the self-interest of the electorate not surprisingly also support the dictates of justice in this matter. This solely concerns individuals and therefore has no bearing on national policy, on which the electorate must require all parties to focus.

Why is Labour then so interested in diverting our attention? Could it be that their economic policies are in serious disarray, with Mr Blair seeking to recalcitrant disbelief to stay silent?

When will the people of this country wake up to these bizarre inconsistencies — and do they really wish to be lulled by irrelevancies into a credulity of Labour's New Toryism that on the face of it is quite incredible? It is time for the proper debate to start.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK MINFORD,
Liverpool Macroeconomic Research,
PO Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX.
March 29.

From Mr Philip K. Wray

Sir, I comment on the case of Mr Piers Merchant, MP, and the claims that he had an affair with a Soho club hostess (reports, March 28).

I do not believe that a person in any profession except the Church should be judged on their moral conduct, providing such conduct does not break the law. It is quite ridiculous for any political party to set themselves up as

guardians of the nation's moral welfare. Morality is a personal issue and will always remain so.

Mr Merchant has been an able constituency MP, and any alleged sexual dalliance should be a matter of private concern for him and his family. Those within the Conservative Party now calling for his resignation must ask themselves two questions: first, have they never been guilty of making an indiscreet decision in their lives, and second, do they really believe that the vast majority of voters will be influenced by Mr Merchant's alleged actions? If they can answer yes to both questions then I would suggest that they do not live in the real world and thus have no right to parliamentary office.

Several American presidents and a number of senior European politicians who have been the subject of press speculation over their sexual conduct have continued to lead active political careers. Perhaps, instead of condemning Mr Merchant, the Conservative Party should elevate him to a position of leadership and thus possibly improve their chances of re-election.

I am, Sir,
PHILIP K. WRAY,
2 The Close,
Brangwyn Drive,
Brighton, East Sussex.
March 28.

From Mr Christopher Maguire

Sir, In his impatience with the media focus on sleaze (report, April 1), Mr Major is in danger of forgetting that a healthy consequence of local democracy is that the locals may disagree and stand up to central authority. But he does acknowledge that ultimately he has no power over them.

By contrast, new Labour deals ruthlessly with dissent within its party from whatever quarter. What is presented as strong leadership can become anti-democratic authoritarianism. Might this tendency manifest itself in government?

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER MAGUIRE,
15 Harston Road,
Newton, Cambridge.
April 1.

Jewish settlements in Jerusalem

From Sir Cyril Townsend, MP for Bekeley Heath (Conservative)

Sir, In the course of this century, the Palestinian Arabs have been reduced from being the overwhelming majority of the population between the Jordan and the Mediterranean to being a minority seeking statehood in a mere 20 per cent of their country, Mr Charles Krauthammer ("Arafat is fooling America", March 27) appears to be outraged that Yasser Arafat should even seek that much (ie, the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

The Palestinians are justified in believing that, in being prepared to accept the existence of the State of Israel on the great majority of what they consider to be their land, they have given up enough and it is totally unreasonable that they should be told that they must yield more to Israel's behest.

The existing Jewish majority in Jerusalem was created through a policy, zealously applied by successive Israeli Governments since 1967, of

creating one. A series of settlements was created, mainly on land taken from Arab owners, which raised the Jewish population from zero to around 170,000. Har Homa would complete the encirclement of the Arab areas of Jerusalem, plugging a gap between two settlements which were built mainly on land taken from Arabs and setting the seal on Israeli control of the city.

Every Israeli Government since 1967 has declared that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel; equally, every Palestinian political organisation says that it should be the capital of an independent Palestinian state. The rest of the world is not bound to accept that Israel's assertion of mastery over the city is the last word on the matter.

Yours faithfully,
CYRIL TOWNSEND
(Director),
Council for the Advancement of
Arab-British Understanding,
21 Collingham Road, SW5.
March 27.

Economic optimism

From Mr Roger Fox

Sir, In the late 1960s, as economics students, we used to sit with our lecturers lamenting the failure of the UK economy to achieve the "virtuous circle" of economic success that the West German economy then enjoyed.

Your report today that the current account deficit has fallen to £14 million (the best performance since 1985) completes all the recent evidence that at long last, 30 years later, the UK has achieved what so many governments tried to do and failed. We now have a successful economy and can look competitor countries in the face.

And what has enabled the UK to do this? All those supply side and monetarist policies so derided by traditional Keynesian economists. These policies take a long time to bear fruit but successful they are if given the necessary time. Our best course of action is to introduce more of them.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER FOX,
53 The Avenue, Chiswick, W4.
March 25.

Hong Kong handover

From Mr Dick Wilson

Sir, The people of Hong Kong were disenchanted with their retrocession to China before the Tiananmen killings in 1989, says Jonathan Mirsky ("Turning a blind eye on colony", March 20).

But the possibility of a handover of what democratic institutions existed in Hong Kong was sabotaged by the British colonial government's subsequent extension of the franchise for the Legislative Council in contravention of earlier agreements with China.

Yours sincerely,
DICK WILSON,
White Lodge,
67 Grove Lane, SE5.
March 20.

Cost of a cone

From Mr John Pittuck

Sir, I imagine it is not the quality of the £55,000 revolving neon cone structure erected beside the NHS hospital at Newport, Isle of Wight, which has led doctors to turn their backs on it (report, March 28). Anything that is devised to raise the spirits must be seen as at least therapeutic.

It is the juxtaposition of the hospital and the cone, regardless of where the financing came from, that appears unpalatable to them by acting as a reminder of their impossible struggle with costs.

What a great shame that a work of art should again become the whipping boy. In my own case surgery has allowed me the time to make some small personal contribution to the visual arts and to become increasingly aware of its importance in a civilised world. Art, to me, is not something to be considered a luxurious extra: it is an essential part of our wellbeing, and must not be blamed for other shortcomings that may exist in our system.

Doctors perform remarkable feats to treat and repair us, where they can, to return us to a world where artistic achievement also has a place.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN PITLUCK,
Hillside Cottage,
62 Dunmow Road,
Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire.
March 28.

From Mr Kenneth P. Armitage

Sir, It seems to me that Healing Arts, the organisation which commissioned the neon cone at Newport, is wide of the mark to suggest that it was not paid for with public money. Where on earth do they think money from the National Lottery comes from?

Yours faithfully,
K. ARMITAGE,
6 Deben Valley Drive,
Kesgrave, Suffolk.
March 28.

Future of the last airworthy Comet

From Lord Brabazon of Tara and Mr Alastair Layzell

Sir, We are delighted to learn that the Government's proposed sale at auction of the world's last airworthy de Havilland Comet is likely to be called off (report, March 28). Since 1963 this plane has flown for the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency at Boscombe Down. It is the last flying example of its type and we firmly believe it should remain in Great Britain.

The Comet jet airliner's first flight, in July 1949, flowed from a recommendation of the wartime committee headed by the 1st Lord Brabazon of Tara. In May 1952, when BOAC operated the first regular jet passenger service from London to Johannesburg, Britain led the world. It was the Comet which inaugurated the first transatlantic jet service in 1958. It changed the history of flying.

We hope that the Secretary of State for Defence will now arrange a private treaty sale of the Comet to the National Air Pageant — a recently formed organisation currently applying to the Charity Commissioners for charitable status. The National Air Pageant would arrange for it to be kept flying in the skies over Britain, to appear at air shows where it could be enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people, and to be on view to the public.

Yours faithfully,
BRABAZON OF TARA,
ALASTAIR LAYZELL,
(Founder, The National Air Pageant),
68 Battersea High Street, SW11.
March 28.

Racism in the law

From Mr Zia H. Rahman

Sir, Judge Crawford's disparaging remark giving offence to ethnic minorities (report, March 27) must surely discourage members of such minorities from entering the law. This "regrettable slip" does nothing to disabuse black and non-black people alike of what has perhaps become a common view: that our judiciary is breathtakingly behind the times and that its members lead lives far removed from the sphere of our own.

Things must change and there is some hope they will. The Lord Chancellor's swift and stern rebuke is to be applauded. Having recently returned from several years in the US to begin legal studies here, I am heartened by a number of apparent changes under Lord Mackay of Clashfern. He is, however, wrong on one thing. Remarks such as Justice Crawford's, he states, "do wholly disproportionate damage to the reputation of justice and... the judiciary". Disproportionate? Not from where I'm standing.

Yours faithfully,
Z. RAHMAN,
173 Melrose Avenue,
Willemstad, NW2.
March 28.

Prone to error?

From Mr Brian Morgan

Sir, First on television, now in your report (March 28), we have been informed that the tragic victims of the cult mass suicide in the US were discovered "prone, face up" in the luxury house they had rented.

Is there no St John first-aid-er on your editorial staff, who would instantly have known the difference between prone — lying face down, and supine — lying face up? As I recall, this elementary topic came quite early in my first-aid course.

Yours truly,
B. MORGAN,
Mazna, Rectory Lane,
Great Rissington,
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.
March 28.

Mistaken identity

From Mr Frank L. Shaw,
Pro-Chancellor of the University of Central England in Birmingham

Sir, All Fools' Day notwithstanding, I must admit — as an Old Nottinghamian — to experiencing a brief frisson of concern when I read today that a Belgian lady was seeking a certain Frank Shaw, the alleged father of her wartime daughter, now aged 51.

Never have I been so pleased to admit to having served in the Royal Navy rather than the Sherwood Foresters (coincidentally, my father's First World War regiment). Even so, this misplaced notoriety has provided my family with much amusement.

Yours faithfully,
FRANK SHAW,
Pro-Chancellor,
University of Central England in Birmingham,
Perry Bar, Birmingham B42 2SU.
April 1.

Short for protester?

From Mr R. E. Nicklas

Sir, I am aware of the meanings of Yuppy and Nimby, but what is a Swampy (reports, April 1 and 2)?

Is it a Sincere Well-meaning Amiable Motorway Protester or one who Shirks Work and Argues Make-believe Politics?

Yours faithfully,
R. E. NICKLAS,
42 Park Lane,
Cottingham, East Yorkshire.
April 2.

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RADIO**
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THURSDAY APRIL 3 1997

City fears effects of boom in credit

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

CONSUMER credit rose by a record amount in February, increasing fears in the City that the economy is in danger of overheating. Net consumer credit rose £1.22 billion in February, according to data published by the Bank of England, compared with £884 million the previous month and well above City expectations of an increase of about £1 billion. The growth in credit card lending was also a record at £337 million, compared with £89 million in January. Economists said the figures would increase the pressure on an incoming Chancellor of the Exchequer to raise rates after the general election — although the Government insisted yesterday that the country is not returning to a boom-and-bust economy. The City is predicting that it may be necessary to raise rates by as much as 0.5 per cent immediately after the election if the new Chancellor is to establish credibility with the markets. The growing concern about the threat of interest rate rises, coupled with continuing fears over the decline in Wall Street, prompted the FT-SE 100 index to slip 11.5 points to 4,236.6. The rise in consumer and credit card borrowing reflected the surge in retail sales in February, when sales of clothing and footwear were especially strong. The annual rate

of growth in consumer credit increased from 16.8 per cent in January to 17.5 per cent in February. But the growth in total personal borrowing remained flat at 0.6 per cent in February, although the annual rate rose slightly, from 6.7 per cent to 6.9 per cent. Economists said that the more modest rise in total personal borrowing suggested that the rise in consumer credit could in part reflect a change in patterns of payment rather than greatly increased spending. The surge in consumer borrowing was not replicated in other monetary data published yesterday. This showed a small fall in the growth of mortgage lending and the narrow money supply. Mortgage lending rose £1.83 billion, according to the Bank of England, slightly below the figure of £1.9 billion in January. The annual rate increased from 5 per cent, to 5.1 per cent, which remains well below the levels seen in the late 1980s. New mortgage commitments also slipped, from 97,000 to 95,000 in February. The quarterly level of new mortgage commitments also showed a fall — for the first time since August 1985 — suggesting that the increase in house prices could slow in the next few months. M0, the measure of narrow money supply, increased 0.5 per cent in March, taking the annual rate to 6.4 per cent. The less erratic notes and coins component — which excludes banking operational deposits — also showed an annual advance of 6.4 per cent. The figures came in slightly below City expectations but were above the Government's target range of 1 to 4 per cent. The growth in the broad money supply, M4, was meanwhile revised down, from 11.3 per cent to 11.2 per cent in February, compared with 10 per cent in January. Simon Briscoe, UK economist at Nikko Europe, said the money supply figures suggested that retail sales should moderate in the coming months and that fears of a consumer boom remained unproven. He added that the annual growth in M0 had now fallen back to levels last seen in the first half of 1996 — when retail sales growth was about 2.5 per cent — suggesting that sales will slip back from the 4.4 per cent recorded in February.



The Madness of King George, starring Nigel Hawthorne, was a big hit at the box-office



Michelle Pfeiffer thrilled the Baker Boys



Laurence Olivier's Oscar-winning Henry V



Carry On at the Carlton for the old comedy team that is currently popular in France

Going, going but no gong as Carlton seals Rank deal

BY ERIC REGULY

CARLTON, the TV company, has paid £65 million for Rank Organisation's film distribution business, whose catalogue ranges from *Great Expectations* to *The Fabulous Baker Boys*. But the deal did not include the "gongman" that has provided the opening sequence for Rank films since 1935. Rank is keeping the logo for its remaining film businesses, including Pinewood Studios, Rank Film Laboratories and a video duplication business. It will allow Carlton to use the gongman logo only for the library's existing films and those in current production. Carlton said the Rank purchase was driven by the company's desire to expand

its own film library as the number of television channels is set to balloon. Digital broadcasting will make hundreds of new channels available within a year and Carlton plans to draw on the Rank catalogue to feed the new digital terrestrial channels it is developing for launch in 1998. Nigel Walmsley, chairman of Carlton UK Television, said: "We are already in the business of managing a library for broadcasters around the world. The Rank library is a natural extension of our business. It makes us more attractive as a one-stop shop for broadcasters." The Rank catalogue has 740 feature films, most of

them from the 1930s, '40s and '50s. The titles include *Oliver Twist*, *The Thirty Nine Steps* and *Oliver's Hamlet* and *Henry V*. More recent films include the *Carry On* series, currently popular in France. *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*. Rank sold the business partly because it did not have the appetite to invest in new films to update the catalogue. The division had an operating profit of £4.1 million on turnover of £25.4 million last year. Andrew Teare, Rank's chief executive, said the sale largely completes its disposal programme, which has raised about £300 million.

Tempus, page 30

GEC takes on Alcatel in bid battle for Thomson

BY OLIVER AUGUST

GEC, the diversified industrial group, has delivered a blow to its partnership with the French group Alcatel-Alsthom by independently entering the bidding war for one of France's leading defence companies. GEC submitted a surprise £1.2 billion bid for Thomson-CSF, the defence electronics group, to the French Government last Friday — in direct competition with a bid by Alcatel. Lagardère Group, a partner of BAE's missile division, is the third bidder for the 58 per cent Thomson stake to be privatised next month. The move by GEC signals a shift in its strategy for European consolidation after its failed merger talks with British Aerospace. The outcome of the privatisation is seen as crucial to the restructuring of the European defence industry and is likely to trigger further consolidation involving BAE and its French and German rivals. The business paper *La Tribune* said the French Government would decide tomorrow which of the bids are considered valid and will be given further consideration. *Le Monde* said the GEC bid was embarrassing because it undermined the French Government's plans for creating French national champions in the defence sectors. But defence insiders in London suggested that GEC's bid indicates growing frustration with its French partners. Plans for a split have been discussed after problems over co-operation on nuclear power. Alcatel could take control of

GEC Alsthom's power engineering business, with GEC holding the rail, shipbuilding and industrial interests. Serge Tchuruk, Alcatel's chairman, said recently that the two groups would embark on a "fundamental reflection" on the future of GEC Alsthom. GEC yesterday failed to confirm or deny the bid reports while the French Finance and Economics Ministries declined to comment on the existence of a third bidder. Both Lagardère and Alcatel had bid for Thomson in a previous procedure involving Thomson SA, Thomson-CSF's parent. The bidding was won by Lagardère with Daewoo Electronics, the Korean electronics group. But the French Government cancelled the deal last December after objections by the independent Privatisation Commission. Bidders have until May 7 to submit their final offers. Analysts in London said GEC's chances of winning the bidding were slim. The French Government has said it wants to create the biggest possible grouping around Thomson to cut out duplication in research and development funds and boost economies of scale. So far the Government's attitude has been that non-French groups are welcome only as subsidiaries. In response, GEC recently started to look towards other European countries to forge links. Lagardère said it was aware of GEC's bid. Noel Forgeard, managing director of Lagardère's Matra Defense Espace unit, said: "GEC has always shown interest in the Thomson privatisation."

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES		
FTSE 100	4236.6	(-11.5)
FTSE All share	3,811	(-2.92)
Nikkei	18037.30	(+167.71)
New York	8552.89	(-58.16)*
Dow Jones	752.82	(-6.82)*
US RATE		
Federal Funds	5 1/8%	(8%)
Long Bond	9 5/8%	(9 1/4%)
Yield	7.10%	(7.08%)
LONDON MONEY		
3-month interbank	8 1/8%	(8 1/4%)
Libor long gill	10 1/8%	(10 1/4%)
STERLING		
New York	1.8488*	(1.8523)
London	1.8445	(1.8468)
DM	2.7468	(2.7493)
FF	9.2483	(9.2545)
GF	2.3649	(2.3739)
Yen	201.32	(202.00)
S index	98.6	(98.7)
DOLLAR		
London	1.6788*	(1.6868)
DM	1.4337*	(1.4413)
FF	122.70*	(121.83)
S index	103.7	(103.8)
Tokyo close Yen	122.28	
MONEY MARKET		
Brent 15-day (Jun)	\$19.10	(\$19.25)
GOLD		
London close	\$380.88	(\$380.45)

Market goal

Bolton Wanderers, one of the founding clubs of the Football League, is to join the stock market. Dealings in Newcastle United started and Derby County also revealed a float. Page 29

Unco-operative

Terry Thomas, managing director of the Co-operative Bank, said its parent company had no intention of opening takeover talks with Lantica, the family investment trust run by Andrew Regan. Page 28

Prince al-Waleed buys 5% of Apple

BY JON ASHWORTH

PRINCE al-Waleed bin Talal, the acquisitive Saudi investor, has snapped up 5 per cent of Apple Computer, the struggling personal computer manufacturer. He has spent \$115 million buying Apple shares in the open market in the past few weeks. The move mirrors recent share purchases in Trans World Airlines (TWA), which left Prince al-Waleed holding a 5 per cent stake. He said, in a statement: "I have been following the technology industry closely for quite some time, and Apple in particular for a number of months. I believe there is serious potential for Apple to provide large returns to its shareholders once again, as it did in the past." Larry Ellison, the flamboyant software tycoon, is tipped to be considering a bid for Apple, which has been hit by steep losses and a dwindling share price. Once America's most profitable PC maker, the company erred in restricting its software to its own machines. This allowed Microsoft to steal a march with packages such as Windows 95. Apple reported losses of \$816 million in 1996, and was recently named one of America's worst-performing shares. Prince al-Waleed is consistently drawn to famous names that have seen better days. He holds investments in Euro Disney, Citicorp and Canary Wharf. Pennington, page 29

Cellnet counts cost of cut-offs

BY ERIC REGULY

CELLNET, the second largest mobile phone company, was in turmoil last night after reporting that it recruited only 12,000 customers in the first three months of the year, far behind the levels announced by even its smallest rivals. The disappointing figures came three weeks after the abrupt departure of Howard Ford, the managing director, amid rumours that Project Force, Cellnet's new £100 million billing system, was proving a failure. Mr Ford, a former IBM executive, was ultimately responsible for its implementation. Cellnet, which is 60 per cent owned by British Telecom and 40 per cent by Securicor, attributed the low growth figures to the large-scale disconnection of customers who had not paid their bills. The credit problems were said to be worst at Securicor Cellular Services, the Securicor division that sells Cellnet contracts. It also blamed Cellnet's decision to allow customers to drop their service on one month's notice instead of three. Cellnet



Howard Ford: abrupt departure

actually signed up 273,000 customers in the first quarter; all but 12,000 of them left because they were disconnected for absence of payments, or because they dropped their service voluntarily. Cellnet now has 2.7 million customers on its analogue and digital networks, up 13 per

cent over last year, against Vodafone's 2.87 million UK customers. Cellnet said it expects to "resume good growth" in the second quarter and confirmed that the new billing system is six months behind schedule. Orange and One2One, the smallest of the four mobile phone companies, announced better than expected growth figures as the market expanded. One2One, which is owned equally by Cable and Wireless and US West, the regional phone company, gained 75,000 new customers in the quarter to March 31, up 114 per cent from the same period last year, taking its customer base to 620,000. Orange, which is controlled by Hutchison Whampoa of Hong Kong, took on 109,000 customers in the quarter, matching the gains made previously and lifting its all-digital subscriber base to 894,000. Life Numbers, the company that sells the 07000 "follow me" phone numbers, said that its first-half loss will be greater than expected.

Tempus, page 30

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AltaVista deal lifts MAID

Shares in MAID rose 5p to 200p after the group announced a joint technology initiative with AltaVista Internet Software, the largest data engine group on the Internet.

MAID said: "The agreement will result in one of the world's fastest and most accurate data retrieval engines for business applications."

Lands ahead

Lands Improvement, the agricultural landowner, yesterday reported a 27 per cent rise in pre-tax profits from £3.2 million to £4.1 million for the year ended December 31. A total dividend of 4.7p (4.7p) will be paid on May 31.

Brooks rises

Brooks Services Group, the Bristol textile rental and retail services company, yesterday reported a 13 per cent rise in pre-tax profits from £1.1 million to £1.2 million. The final dividend of 2.3p, payable on June 3, raises the total by 17 per cent to 3.5p (3p).

UDO falls

Pre-tax profits at UDO Holdings, the office supplies and reprographic services group, have fallen by 28.3 per cent from £3.17 million to £2.27 million for the six months to December 31. The dividend has been maintained at 2.75p, to be paid on May 23.

Chief resigns

Pittard, the leather group, said Aldan Creedon, its deputy group managing director has resigned as a director and was leaving the company yesterday to pursue personal interests.

Heinz sale

Heinz, the food group, is to sell its Tip Top New Zealand ice cream operations to Australia's Peters & Brown for an undisclosed sum.

Grafton buys

Grafton Group has bought Wessex Builders Merchants for up to £4 million in cash.

Lanica left out in cold as Society subsidiary unveils record results

Co-op Bank rises for third year

By ROBERT MILLER
BANKING CORRESPONDENT

TERRY THOMAS, managing director of the Co-operative Bank, unveiled a third consecutive year of record profits and confirmed that the Co-operative Wholesale Society, its parent company, had no intention of opening possible takeover talks with Lanica, the family investment trust run by Andrew Regan.

Mr Thomas said the Co-op Bank, which lifted pre-tax profits 24 per cent to £45.5 million, had seen "a phenomenal" increase in retail and corporate business from its larger high street rivals. There are, he added, no benefits to be derived from talking to Lanica, whose shares were suspended in February at £19.50 after takeover talk caused a sharp price rise.

Mr Thomas, who retired in October after ten years at the bank's helm, said of Lanica: "I look to the moment when their shares are re-listed. Shareholders should sell and sell early as they are likely to drop like a stone. I wouldn't give you thruppence for them."

City observers point out that Mr Regan has never expressed a desire to be a banker and Bank approval would be necessary even if the Co-op were to be immediately sold on.

Lanica and Galileo, its shell takeover company backed by Jupiter Asset Management, Schroders and Killick, the stockbroker, declined to reply to the Co-op's comments yesterday. It is understood that Mr Regan has applied to the Bank of England to be deemed a "fit and proper" person to own the Co-op bank should a takeover materialise.

City observers point out that Mr Regan has never expressed a desire to be a banker and Bank approval would be necessary even if the Co-op were to be immediately sold on.

The Co-op Bank reported retail customer deposits up 27 per cent last year. They now stand at £24 billion, double the level five years ago. Total assets rose to £45.5 billion. The bank also announced details of a three-year no-compulsory-redundancy agreement with Biffi, the banking, finance and insurance union.

Ray Shuttleworth, Biffi's assistant secretary, said of the Co-op's offer of talks: "The Co-operative bank is unique in Britain and we want its difference to be protected." He added that the union welcomed the Co-op's statement that a Regan takeover is "doomed to failure".

Mr Thomas said the Co-op Bank was halfway through a reorganisation that would bring "automated" banking outlets that would provide a 24-hour service. He added: "We are building a bank to compete in the 21st century by providing the anytime, anywhere banking service that the increasingly sophisticated individual and corporate customers demand."

Pennington, page 29

Trading is halted in Bre-X shares

By GEORGE SIVELL

SHARES in Bre-X, the Canadian gold company, stopped trading on the Toronto stock exchange yesterday because of technical problems at the exchange that followed a fall of 65 cents to C\$3.20 in very heavy trading. The Toronto exchange said: "The stock is unavailable because of technical problems."

The fall followed a pronouncement from the Indonesian Mining Minister that there was gold at Bre-X's site at Busang, but that the actual amount had yet to be ascertained.

The Minister also said there would be a parliamentary hearing during June to discuss the fate of the applications for contracts by Bre-X to further explore and develop the Busang find. The applications have been put on hold by the Government.

Ida Bagus Sudjana, the Minister, said: "We believe there is gold there... (but) whether the amount is 50 or 70 million ounces, we have yet to check it out."

Bre-X, which discovered the Busang deposit, said last week that the property might hold less than the 71 million ounces of gold it had declared previously. The admission came a week after Michael de Guzman, the Bre-X chief geologist who helped to discover the deposit, fell out of a helicopter on his way to Busang. An autopsy report is awaited.



Julian Bloch, chief executive of Ultra, which is interested in buying US businesses

Ultra on acquisition trail

By OLIVER AUGUST

ULTRA ELECTRONICS, the aerospace components company, is seeking acquisitions to complement its current position as supplier on major projects such as the Eurofighter and Nimrod.

Ultra, whose chief executive is Julian Bloch, emphasised its interest in American rather than European electronics businesses and stated its intentions to avoid diversification so soon after last year's flotation. Peter Macfarlane, chairman, said: "Ultra's position in niche markets, its strong alliances and teaming arrangements leave it well placed to benefit from the continued consolidation taking place in the industry."

This should provide opportunities for further strategic acquisitions, which should enable Ultra to expand both its technology base and its market breadth.

In the year to December 30, pre-tax profits increased from £6.4 million to £14.1 million. Earnings per share rose from 6.9p to 15.1p. No dividend will be paid but an interim dividend is planned for next year.

The orderbook stands at a record £174.1 million.

Tempos, page 30

Lloyd's in repeat of £1bn profit

By JON ASHWORTH

LLOYD'S of London, which incurred huge losses in the late 1980s and early 1990s, said preliminary pre-tax profits for 1994 exceeded £1 billion for the second year running.

The figures, reflecting the year in which corporate capital took hold at Lloyd's, compare with a profit of £1.083 billion in 1993. The preliminary result is based on an initial review of syndicate returns, together with market projections.

Lloyd's publishes its results three years in arrears. The corporation forecast a profit for the 1994 year underwriting year of £1.008 million, based on a less favourable dollar exchange rate. Final figures will be published in early June.

Rates in the marine market peaked towards the end of 1994, but the large amounts of capacity flooding in led to rate reductions in most sectors in 1995. Non-marine was anticipated a good profit in 1994 despite some effect from the Northridge earthquake in California and robust competition from worldwide direct and reinsurance markets.

The aviation market enjoyed modest rate rises throughout 1994. After a cyclical peak in 1993, motor rates experienced downward pressure throughout 1994, and remain under pressure, fuelled by the emergence of aggressive direct players.

BASF confident as orders start to rise

BASF, the German chemicals company, expects to post stronger earnings and an increase in sales because of the global recovery. The company said sales this year are expected to exceed DM49 billion after rising 5.5 per cent to DM48.77 billion in 1996, when pre-tax profits climbed 6.9 per cent to DM4.4 billion. BASF, the last of Germany's three chemical giants to report its 1996 results, said 1997 had started strongly as orders rose compared with the end of 1996.

It said it expects stronger domestic demand, marking an improvement from sluggish economic conditions in Germany which kept a lid on domestic sales last year. Sales climbed only 2.8 per cent to DM12.97 billion in Germany. In March BASF's rivals, Hoechst and Bayer, disappointed the markets with weak fourth-quarter earnings and a subdued outlook that sent chemical industry shares spinning.

Asprey appointment

ASPREY, the luxury jeweller and accessories group, has snatched a senior executive from Liberty to run its London and overseas operations. Geoffrey Lang joins on April 21 as managing director for Asprey London and International. Mr Lang replaces Tim Cooper, who is stepping down ahead of his retirement later this year. The appointment is the latest in a round of management changes at Asprey. Barbara Snod joined as retail director last month and Maria Sealy joined as marketing director in January.

US orders increase

US FACTORY orders rose 0.8 per cent in February after a surge of 2.5 per cent in January, the Commerce Department said yesterday. Wall Street analysts had foreseen an increase in February of 1 per cent. Orders for durable goods went up 1.5 per cent in February while those for non-durables gained 0.1 per cent. February factory orders were up 7.8 per cent year-on-year. Excluding transportation, factory orders rose 1.6 per cent in February, against 2.6 per cent in January. Manufacturing inventories rose 0.4 per cent, against 0.5 per cent in January.

Radamec 28% ahead

RADAMEC GROUP, a maker of high-tech equipment for broadcasting and defence, lifted pre-tax profits 28 per cent, to £1.72 million, from £1.34 million, in the year to December 31. Earnings per share rose 26 per cent, to 6.2p (4.9p). Turnover was up 32 per cent, to £16.5 million (£12.46 million). Sales were boosted by a new virtual reality TV studio system, Virtual Scenario, and contracts to supply electro-optical equipment to the Indian Coastguard and the Royal Navy. A 2p final dividend, due on July 4, makes 3p, up from 2.4p.

Bickerton joins AIM

BICKERTON GROUP, the building contractor, is joining the Alternative Investment Market via a placing of up to 3.102 million ordinary shares at 40p. The issue has been oversubscribed and dealings are to start tomorrow. The board will speak for 68 per cent of the equity. The business, founded in 1930, passed from family ownership in 1985. Ken Wilkins and family trusts acquired a majority stake in 1992. The group, headed by Mr Wilkins and Bob Morton, acquired the name, contracts and goodwill of Hatfield Construction in 1993.

Barr raises dividend

BARR and Wallace Arnold Trust, the motor retail and leisure group, lifted pre-tax profits to £5.3 million, from £4.6 million, in the year to December 31. Earnings per share rose to 23.4p, from 20.8p, and the year's dividend rises by 9.1 per cent, to 12p. David Winterbottom, chairman, said: "Our businesses still trade in difficult conditions with the economic recovery not reflected through into retail sales in our areas of operation." The motor division had started the current year well, and leisure bookings were ahead of 1996 and 1995, he said.

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Trafficmaster system licensed to Germany

By FRASER NELSON

SHARES in Trafficmaster sprang from a 12-month low yesterday as the company sealed a deal to license its traffic jam warning systems to Mannesmann Autocom, the German telecoms group.

The company, whose congestion detectors already cover British motorways, said that the deal establishes its technology as the European standard. The shares rose 32p, to 307p.

Mannesmann is joining forces with Deutsche Telecom,

its rival, to plant the detectors, and aims to cover 75 per cent of Germany's motorways by next summer. The two will then sell the dashboard technology as competitors.

Trafficmaster is expected to receive £2 million from the installation, and £3 million a year after German drivers start buying the system.

Trafficmaster is expected to announce, on Monday, a 1996 pre-tax loss of £1.5 million (1995: loss of £2.48 million).

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

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LEGAL NOTICES

FRIENDS PROVIDENT

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 14th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of FRIENDS PROVIDENT LIFE OFFICE will be held at 11, GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, on Wednesday, 27th March 1997 at 2.30pm, to transact the following business:-

- To receive the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 1996 and the Reports of the Directors and Auditors thereon.
- To elect a Director of the Office. The list of names, the List of Directors, is enclosed with this notice.
- To elect a Director of the Office, Graham Acker and Michael McNeill, who retire by rotation.
- To elect Christopher Bennett, who has been appointed since the last Annual General Meeting, as a Director of the Office.
- To re-appoint Price Waterhouse as the auditors to the Office and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration.

By Order of the Directors,
N.W. Swindell,
Secretary.

3rd April 1997

A Member is entitled to appoint another person (who need not be a Member) to attend the above meeting and vote instead of him. To be valid, the instrument appointing a proxy, which should be as near as the form set out in rule 12 of the Rules of the Office as contained in the notice, and the power of attorney or other authority (if any) under which it is signed, or a notarial certificate of that power or authority, must be deposited at Friends Provident Life, 11 GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for holding the meeting, or postponed meeting, or in the case of a poll, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the taking of the poll. Proxy forms may be obtained on application to the Secretary, from whom copies of the Annual Report and Accounts may also be obtained.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS
The 14th Annual General Meeting of Friends Provident Life Office will be held at 11, GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, on Wednesday, 27th March 1997 at 2.30pm, to transact the following business:-

STANDARD LIFE LIMITED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 14th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of STANDARD LIFE LIMITED will be held at 1, GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, on Wednesday, 27th March 1997 at 2.30pm, to transact the following business:-

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3rd April 1997

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NOTICE TO MEMBERS
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N.W. Swindell,
Secretary.

3rd April 1997

A Member is entitled to appoint another person (who need not be a Member) to attend the above meeting and vote instead of him. To be valid, the instrument appointing a proxy, which should be as near as the form set out in rule 12 of the Rules of the Office as contained in the notice, and the power of attorney or other authority (if any) under which it is signed, or a notarial certificate of that power or authority, must be deposited at Friends Provident Life, 11 GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for holding the meeting, or postponed meeting, or in the case of a poll, not less than 24 hours before the time appointed for the taking of the poll. Proxy forms may be obtained on application to the Secretary, from whom copies of the Annual Report and Accounts may also be obtained.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS
The 14th Annual General Meeting of Friends Provident Life Office will be held at 11, GERRARD STREET, LONDON, W1P 9JL, on Wednesday, 27th March 1997 at 2.30pm, to transact the following business:-

- To receive the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 1996 and the Reports of the Directors and Auditors thereon.
- To elect a Director of the Office. The list of names, the List of Directors, is enclosed with this notice.
- To elect a Director of the Office, Graham Acker and Michael McNeill, who retire by rotation.
- To elect Christopher Bennett, who has been appointed since the last Annual General Meeting, as a Director of the Office.
- To re-appoint Price Waterhouse as the auditors to the Office and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration.

By Order of the Directors,
N.W. Swindell,
Secretary.

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Bolton Wa
head for sto

Mortgage

EUROPE

□ The Richard Branson approach, Saudi-style □ Spottiswoode decision has wide implications □ Banking on leadership

A prince among investors

□ ANOTHER WEEK, another few hundred million dollars ... Prince al-Waleed bin Talal is beginning to resemble one of those American billionaires who profited so handsomely from the 1929 Crash. As stockbrokers leapt from the windows, the opportunists were waiting with their cheque books, ready to capitalise on the market panic.

Astute, of course, but will the same prove true for Prince al-Waleed? His reputation as a canny investor is so far intact — his stakes in Citicorp and Euro Disney have proved their worth — but could he be heading for a fall? In the past three weeks, he has taken a stake in Trans World Airlines (TWA), announced a \$600 million hotel deal with Loro, paid \$20 million for 5 per cent in Norwegian Cruise Line, and spent \$115 million buying shares in Apple Computer. Surely there is a danger that he will trip himself up?

Not necessarily. For a start, the prince appears to have something of which Western moguls can only dream — access to a limitless supply of cash. He seemed to have little trouble stumping up £104 million for the Hotel George V in Paris. His timely arrival at Euro Disney — five years old next week — did not prompt questions about his credit-worthiness. His Middle Eastern assets, spanning con-

struction, retailing and banking, are worth a reputed \$4 billion, so one can only guess at the amounts sloshing around.

Secondly, Prince al-Waleed adopts what could be dubbed the "Richard Branson" approach to business. He makes shrewd use of advisers, understands the value of a brand, and is careful to spread his risks. Witness the investment in Silvio Berlusconi's television empire, in which the prince was just part of a £700 million consortium. Ditto the Reichmann-led consortium that paid £800 million for Canary Wharf in London's Docklands.

TWA and Apple undoubtedly come at the riskier end of the investment spectrum, but could yield spectacular returns in the longer term. Apple, for one, has a great brand name, and an association with excellence, even if it lost its way when the personal computer market shifted from manufacturers, such as IBM, to software houses such as Microsoft. Prospects must be reasonable, whatever the outcome of Larry Ellison's long-rumoured \$1 billion punt.

As it is, Prince al-Waleed's

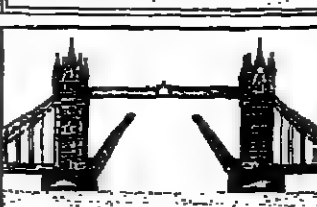
legacy has become almost self-fulfilling. The mere hint that he is on board is enough to make people sit up and pay attention. The downside, of course, is that his name is now routinely mentioned when any big hotel investment comes up for grabs — look at the fuss over the Savoy last year — but he can live with that.

The only odd move so far has been the link-up with Michael Jackson, which turns on vague plans for a multi-media entertainment company based on "family values". Hotels, fine. Airlines, no problem. But family values? Perhaps this is one idea that is best forgotten.

Pressure still on British Gas

□ TWELVE months ago, domestic gas competition was pioneered in the South West. Great things were hoped for by a government determined to inject competition into household energy supply. Exposing British Gas (now Centrica) to rivals would reduce prices and set in place a system in which gas

PENNINGTON



suppliers would fight each other for business.

Has it worked? That is what the Director-General of Gas Supply must decide when she rules on whether Centrica can offer special local price discounts and start to claw back market share. In order to sanction such a move, Centrica must be satisfied that a competitive market has been established. If it hasn't, and British Gas prices are cut, many of the companies vying for its business with cheaper tariffs may soon burn out. To the many people who still look upon the British Gas brand as the gas board, the lack of much price incentive to change will persuade them to stay. Anything less than full com-

petition in the market in its early stages will not ensure proper competition when the whole country is able to choose. A year on, British Gas retains 80 per cent of the South West's households despite other companies offering tariff discounts of 20 per cent on its prices. Pessimistic rumours suggest that some rivals may not trade in the South West for much longer as they struggle to make returns on low customer numbers. British Gas's nearest rival has just 8½ per cent of the market.

Centrica has decided for itself that competition is established and has already offered a discount to direct debit customers. When British Gas's hold was prised from the industrial market, it was made to lose 60 per cent market share in the larger market and 45 per cent in the smaller business sector before it could cut prices.

Such restraints were imposed to foster competition in an area that is far less brand loyal and far less nervous of change than the average homeowner. Ms Spottiswoode may well feel that Centrica should be forced to see

at least half of its customers disappear before it can be said to competing with its rivals on anything like equal terms.

Better choice for the Co-op

□ THE Co-operative Bank unveiled a healthy 20 per cent return on shareholder funds yesterday. Together with a 24 per cent increase in pre-tax profits, it shows that taking a strong ethical line and holding to a policy of not being all things to all people's banking needs can pay handsome dividends.

Terry Thomas, the bank's managing director, says he can provide people with an alternative service to those of the big clearers and still be a hard-nosed banker. Co-op rejects 40 per cent of all credit card applicants and has cut staff from 4,500 to 3,250 — a level which has begun to climb again and now stands at 3,900. All this might attract little attention outside banking had the Co-op bank not been caught up in a putative takeover of its parent by Lantica, a family trust

run by young Andrew Regan, through a company called Galileo. The Co-op movement has closed ranks and refused even to have talks about talks.

Much is made of Regan's supposed desire to asset strip and sell off chunks such as funerals, farming and foods. So what happens to the banking jewel in Co-op's crown? Co-op directors are paid to look after the interests of all members. They should address urgently the poor performance elsewhere. This does not mean the movement would serve its members well by being broken up and sold off piecemeal.

What the movement needs now is some sterling leadership. Mr Thomas is to stand down from the bank in October. He looks an ideal choice to turn round the wider business.

Team spirit

□ THE rush to market by football clubs is creating some strange businesses. Premiership struggler Southampton has aptly teamed up with a former specialist in retirement homes. Yesterday Bolton Wanderers sealed a reverse takeover by Mosaic Investments, previously known for spirits measures and a stake in Copyright Promotions, which sells the rights to The Simpsons, Star Wars and Mr Men.



Charles Wightman, right, and Aidan Connolly, finance director, expect to take advantage of improving markets

Profits slip at Walker Greenbank

WALKER GREENBANK, the wall coverings and fabrics group, suffered a 6 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to £9 million for the year to January 31 despite lifting sales 5 per cent to £100.9 million (Chris Ayres writes).

Charles Wightman, chief executive, was bullish about the year ahead, saying: "I am disappointed that a drop in demand in certain of our markets has temporarily undermined our trading performance."

"However, our extensive capital investment programme and the restructuring of our cost base have positioned us well to take advantage of markets which are showing signs of improvement."

A final dividend of 24p a share, due July 8, maintains the total dividend at 37p, payable from earnings that fell to 5p from 5.6p.

British Midland chooses Airbus

BY HARVEY ELLIOTT, AIR CORRESPONDENT

BRITISH MIDLAND yesterday chose Airbus jets to be the mainstay of its fleet into the next century — breaking Boeing's dominance and giving the European Airbus consortium its biggest British sales boost.

In a deal worth more than \$1 billion, the airline is to take delivery of eight 196-seat Airbus A321s and twelve 160-seat A320s. Twelve will be leased from the manufacturer and eight will be bought.

The order is the largest ever by a British carrier for aircraft built by the European consortium, in which British Aerospace has a 20 per cent stake.

The choice of engines will be finalised later and is likely to involve as fierce a competition as that over the aircraft.

Sir Michael Bishop, chairman of British Midland, said: "This order is a significant

vote of confidence in the future of our business and the future of European aviation."

Boeing and Airbus had been locked in a bitter sales battle, with Boeing offering both the new 737-800 jetliner and the Boeing 757 to give British Midland a range of options over the size of aircraft in its fleet.

However, Airbus clinched the deal by giving the airline the option of upgrading the A320 to the larger A321 without penalty should demand for capacity exceed the airline's present forecasts.

British Midland has a fleet of 35 jets, of which 27 are Boeing 737s. The first of the new jets will be delivered in 1998, and, as the others are delivered over the following five years, the older Boeings will be phased out and replaced by Airbus jets.

Managers buy Adas for £16.3m

ADAS, the Government's agricultural advisory agency, has been bought by its management for £16.3 million (Fraser Nelson writes).

The agency, which provides research, consultancy and laboratory facilities to the agriculture industry, has openly advocated its privatisation. The buyout was led by Philip Needham, its current chief executive, who will share a 20 per cent stake with the management team. He will be joined by Bob Hart and Cyril Davies.

Mr Needham said: "Since we became a Government Executive Agency in 1992, we have become more competitive and have successfully found new customers. The privatisation, from our point of view, is the culmination of years of effort which we are delighted to see rewarded." The deal was partly funded by 31, the venture capitalist group.

Bolton Wanderers to head for stock market

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

BOLTON WANDERERS, one of the founding clubs of the Football League, is set to become the latest team to join the stock market in a reverse takeover that will value the club at £22 million.

Bolton has agreed a deal with Mosaic Investments, the bar and catering products company, with the club's return to the Premiership virtually guaranteed.

Terms of the deal were disclosed as shares of Newcastle United rose to a

premium on the first day of trading and Derby County revealed it is seeking a £15 million institutional placing ahead of a flotation.

The enlarged group will be renamed Burnden Leisure, after the club's old ground, and will be aiming to develop as a diverse sports and leisure company.

No fresh money will be raised in the flotation, but Mosaic has a cash balance of £8.9 million, which will be made available for transfer deals and for the completion of a new 25,000-seat stadium and

retail park on the edge of the town. David Williams, chairman of Mosaic, said the new company is keen to use the leisure facilities at the stadium in the widest possible way. He is hopeful that it can become a venue for pop concerts and is examining the possibility of investing in other sports such as rugby league.

Mosaic is offering 1,135 shares for every Bolton ordinary share, leaving Bolton shareholders with 67 per cent of the capital of the new company.

Gordon Hargreaves, the

current chairman of Bolton, will hold a stake of around 8 per cent in the new company and will become chief executive of Burnden Leisure. Sue Ball, currently finance director at Mosaic, will become the group's finance director and Mr Williams will become chairman.

Shares in Mosaic are currently suspended at 51½p, with trading in Burnden Leisure expected to recommence at the end of the month.

Shares in Newcastle United rose 5p in first day of trading to close at 140p, ensuring the club instantly became the second most valuable on the stock market with a capitalisation of £200 million. The largest is Manchester United. The flotation raised £54 million, which will be used to repay debt, future installments of transfer fees and develop youth facilities. Newcastle, which has not made a profit in the past five years, has spent nearly £50 million in that time on stars such as Alan Shearer, Les Ferdinand and David Ginola.

Mortgage moans muffled

By ROBERT MILLER

INSURERS and mortgage lenders are failing when it comes to dealing with complaints by the public, according to a survey out today from the Consumers' Association.

Its Which? magazine says that the new Mortgage Code

of Conduct, backed by banks and building societies, should help, but "the Association of British Insurers needs to do more to help consumers".

The Which? survey found that current accounts and mortgages were the products causing most complaints. Current account complaints

were usually about errors, and mortgage complaints tended to be of misleading advice, Which? says.

Which? says that if complaints are not resolved at the first attempt a third of people give up, and says that the message that ombudsmen exist is not getting through.

Gordon Hargreaves, the

Buoyant Yule Catto eyes acquisitions

By MARTIN BARROW

YULE CATTO & Company, the speciality chemicals and building products company, has reported a 10.1 per cent rise in pre-tax profits in 1996 and says that it continues to evaluate potential acquisitions.

Pre-tax profits rose to £36.45 million, from £33.12 million, on turnover slightly down to £383.85 million, from £390.77 million.

There was modest improvement in volumes, but turnover declined in line with selling prices, which benefited from lower material input costs. After two years of extreme volatility, prices of key chemical feedstocks have stabilised at much lower levels, letting margins show some recovery. Speciality chemicals had a

successful year, with most businesses making higher profits. Plant improvements initiated in the past three years are now largely complete and a lower level of maintenance capital is now forecast.

Building products showed a slight improvement in overall profits, although one or two poor performers masked a significant increase from the stronger operations.

Earnings per share rose to 22.7p, from 20.3p. A 5.4p final dividend makes 9p, up 12.5 per cent.

Lord Catto, chairman, said that the company had made a satisfactory start to the current year and that prospects appeared reasonable, in spite of the strength of sterling.

60 years ago Germany started the "integration" of Europe, the BBC promoted appeasement, the "sceptics" were called "Germanophobes" and the Tories tried to de-select Churchill...

EUROPE'S FULL CIRCLE

by Rodney Atkinson

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"In this 160 page work there is so much that has not before been made public that it is a monument to past stealth."

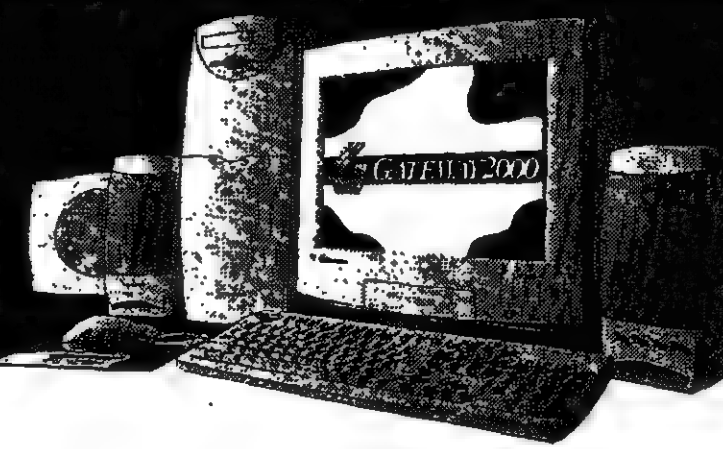
Norris McWhirter CBE

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Lord Stoddart of Swindon

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STOCK MARKET

CLARE STEWART

Second-liners shine as investors stay nervous

SECOND-LINE shares stole what limited stock market glory there was on offer in yesterday's bumpy conditions. FT-SE 250 companies outshone the top 100 to mop up a fair proportion of investors' money after a batch of good results caught the City's attention.

Among the 250 leaders, Hewlett-Packard saw its shares jump 11 per cent, a rise of 13p to 199.25p after an upbeat comment on current year prospects and positive talk from brokers.

There was a hefty volume of over eight million shares in Premier Oil as buyers moved in after recent press comment and a broker's recommendation. The shares were pushed 2.1p higher to 39.75p.

Overall it was a day that could be described as one of three halves as the market waited to see which way the US would jump.

Morning trading saw the FT-SE 100 climb to an 18-point rise before early afternoon jitters knocked confidence and left the market nursing a 29-point fall.

Despite an opening slide on Wall Street, London clawed back some ground to end 11.5 points lower at 4,236.6 on relatively modest volumes of just over 700 million shares.

Dealers are bracing themselves for further volatility, particularly with key US employment data due tomorrow.

After Tuesday's fallout, UK blue-chip stocks recovered some of their poise to notch up modest gains. Leading the way among the top 100 shares was GEC, up 7p to 383p, with dealers responding both to hopes of defence orders and later hope for the group's bid for Thomson, the French electronics giant.

EMI, the music group, recovered more ground, ending with a 16p rise to £11.60. A broker's recommendation helped to fuel demand, with talk also of the Spice Girl effect once again boosting demand.

Reed International, the publishing group, was also sought after, with City comment and bid rumours resurfacing once again. The shares ended 9p higher at £11.01, after slipping back from earlier gains.

British Steel saw some action as nearly 22 million shares changed hands, though the share price edged just 1p ahead to 160.1p. BG was also busy, adding 3p to 164.1p with



Mobile phone numbers grow and share prices rise

volumes of over 18 million. Mobile phone groups switched on to rising subscriber figures. Orange, the UK's third largest operator, moved nearer the one million mark after lifting subscriber numbers to 894,000. Orange slid back from earlier gains to end 1.4p higher at 208.1p, while Vodafone, which revealed its subscriber levels earlier in the

week, moved up 2.1p to 278p. Cable and Wireless added 1.4p to 491.1p after its One-2-10 service added 75,000 subscribers in the first quarter, taking it to a total of 620,000.

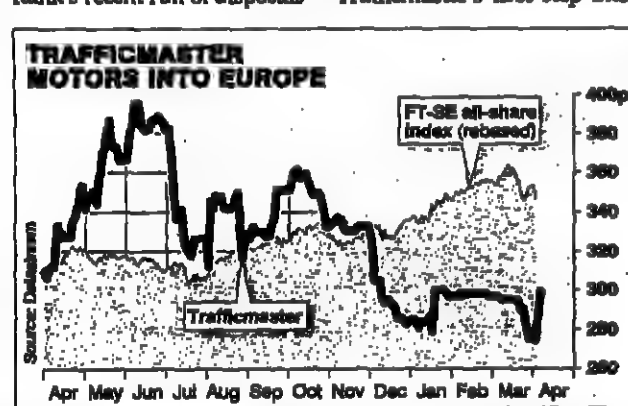
Rank's 555 million disposal of its film distribution arm to Carlton Communications was well received. Rank shares rose 7p to 427.1p, while Carlton added 3.1p to 519.1p. Rank's recent run of disposals

has netted over £300 million and there could be more to come. Banks and insurance groups started well, but ended on a weak note. GRE earned the FT-SE 100 wooden spoon with a drop of 7p to 211.1p, while NatWest Bank ended 14p lower at 679.1p. Newcastle United made a less-striking debut than ex-

pected, moving to a modest 5p premium on the 135p placing price as over eight million shares changed hands.

Trafficmaster, the traffic information group, accelerated 3.2p to 307p, a new high this year, after announcing the licensing of its system into Germany through an agreement with Mannesmann Autocom. The move marks Trafficmaster's first step into

week, moved up 2.1p to 278p. Cable and Wireless added 1.4p to 491.1p after its One-2-10 service added 75,000 subscribers in the first quarter, taking it to a total of 620,000. Rank's 555 million disposal of its film distribution arm to Carlton Communications was well received. Rank shares rose 7p to 427.1p, while Carlton added 3.1p to 519.1p. Rank's recent run of disposals



TRAFFICMASTER MOTORS INTO EUROPE

Europe, where it has its sights set on the French and Dutch markets for 1998.

Oil and gas stocks experienced mixed fortunes in the volatile market. BP recovered some ground to end 9.1p lower at £10.54, after a fall in the price of crude.

Among exploration groups, Cairn Energy dug up a 10p rise to 584.1p. Hardy Oil flared 7p higher to 292p on news of a new gasfield development, and British Petroleum leapt 54.1p to £15.42.

Reports of busy Easter trading helped Centre Gardens, the garden centre group, to a new high on AIM as its shares jumped 17p to 199.1p. Pathfinder Properties, a more recent AIM entrant, moved up 11.1p to 35p.

Shares in Johnston Press, the regional newspaper group, moved up 5p to 191.1p after announcing a 43 per cent rise in pre-tax profits last year. Among electronics groups, Amstrad gave up early gains in the wake of its Dancall disposal, to end 4p lower at 217.1p, while a 26 per cent jump in pre-tax profits at Radamec pushed shares 7p higher to 107.1p.

AIM-quoted Interoute Telecommunications saw its shares dive 4p to a new low of 61.1p. The fall came after the company announced increased losses of £2.5 million for a nine-month period.

Yule Catco, the chemicals group, fell back 13p to 354.1p after profits disappointed the market, while UDO Holdings also failed to impress, ending 15p lower at 157.1p.

GILT-EDGED: Calmer conditions were restored to the London market yesterday, some of the ground lost earlier in the week was recovered. The market outperformed a number of its European counterparts. In gilt futures, volume at 40,000 contracts remained relatively low as investors held back ahead of key economic data due from the US tomorrow. The June series of the long gilt finished up 1/8p at £108.1/8. Treasury 8 per cent 2000 closed up 1/4p at £102.1/4, while Treasury 8 per cent 2015 was up 1/4p at £101.1/4.

NEW YORK: Shares held losses at mid-session after the previous one-day rebound by blue chips failed to gather steam. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 58.16 points at 6,552.89.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 6552.89 (-58.16)
S&P Composite 752.62 (-6.62)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 18097.30 (+167.71)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 12136.32 (+62.13)

Amsterdam:
EEX Index 708.55 (+0.03)

Sydney:
ASX 2353.10 (+3.10)

Frankfurt:
DAX 3301.94 (+5.98)

Singapore:
Straits 2009.81 (+15.14)

Brussels:
General 1175.71 (+27.00)

Paris:
CAC-40 2530.28 (+51.54)

Zurich:
SIX Gen 936.60 (+0.70)

London:
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TEMPUS

Best defence is to attack

NOTHING is officially confirmed, but GEC has apparently made an offer for the French Government's stake in Thomson CSF, the defence electronics group.

There are two reasons to be delighted by this move. Of course, GEC has not a hope of winning the prize — the French Government has grudgingly indicated that foreigners may take minority positions in group bids. That concession was only granted after Lagardere's bid for the Thomson group failed. The bid fell victim to Gallic fears that Lagardere's Korean partner, Daewoo, could not be trusted to cherish the loss-making TV maker, Thomson Multimedia.

The first bit of good news is that GEC is making purposeful moves to set the pace in the long-delayed shake-out among European defence contractors. Impatience with the slow

progress in France pushed GEC into a collaboration agreement last month with Finmeccanica, the Italian state-controlled defence contractor. But for GEC, the prize is still a combination of Marconi and Thomson CSF, which would open the door to huge savings in product design and production. By launching its bid, GEC is forcing the French Government to confront the real issue. Is it prepared to relinquish national control over its defence industry or allow it to wither and die in the face of superior US competition?

The choice will be all the more embarrassing as GEC, with its £2 billion cash pile, can well afford to outbid French rivals. In the end, a formula will be found to conceal the pink faces in the Elysée palace while allowing GEC a minority share in a bid, but the agonising contortions in Paris will be fun to watch.

Rank

RANK has finished overhauling its portfolio. Gone are Cinema Media, the cinema advertising company, and, as of yesterday, Rank Film Distributors, owner of the largest independent film library in the land. On the way out is the remaining stake in Rank Xerox.

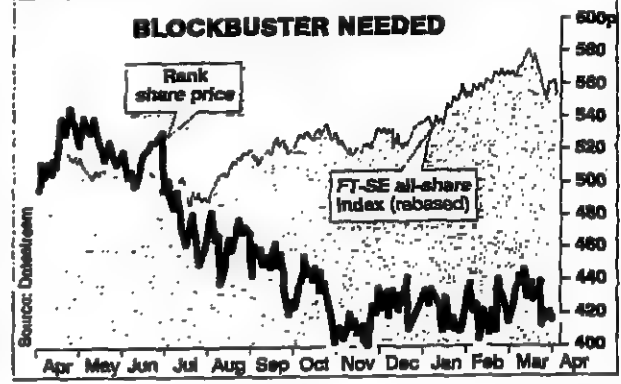
What remains can loosely be described as an entertainment business, comprised of the Hard Rock cafes, bingo clubs, casinos, leisure centres and Odeon cinemas, and a film services division, including Pinewood Studios and a film processing company.

While the slimmed down group perhaps makes more strategic sense, it is hard to identify the engine of growth. The Hard Rock cafes have the greatest potential, but many of their outlets are undergoing costly renovations.

of themed restaurants is threatening a glut on the eatery market. Planet Hollywood and the Harley-Davidson Cafe are two rivals with international ambitions.

Rank's immediate growth prospects are less than tantalising, but its cash resources offer it the opportunity to buy a substantial new business to restore its fortunes. Finding the right business could take some time, and there are few bargains on the market.

In the meantime, shareholders must hope that some of the cash generated by the disposals will be returned in the form of share buybacks or special dividends.



Mobile Phones

ORANGE and Mercury One-2-One were trumpeting their first-quarter subscription figures, leaving poor old Celtel looking rather frail. Celtel suffered the indignity of some 250,000 disconnections during the period, leaving its net connections up only 12,000. However, the comparison is not entirely fair. There are important reasons why Celtel is suffering so much churn, reasons that may be a warning to other mobile phone operators.

Celtel's service providers have been cracking down on non-payers, disconnecting customers with bad debts more quickly than had hitherto been the practice. That is good news for the industry — the aggressive marketing and easy payment terms for mobile phones were running the risk of encouraging consumer contempt for a commodity service. More aggressive treatment of non-

payers might persuade customers that the bleeding handsets have some value.

But Celtel's churn has a lot to do with the age of its subscriber base. Loss of customers generally occurs after the first year of the contract and logically, a new operator such as Orange has a lot of new subscribers. As its customer base matures, it, too, will suffer more churn. This is a problem for an industry which, so far, has failed to generate much customer loyalty.

Ultra Electronics

FLUTATIONS share at least one trait with cooking — timing is all. Float a company into a recession and gold dust will be swept even higher. Ultra Electronics has shown impeccable timing. Floated last year, it is supported by rising profits and a growing order

book due to the upturn in the aerospace industry. Even if black clouds still lurk on the horizon.

Ultra's business cycle is closely aligned with that of aerospace contractors. Chronically cyclical, aerospace is enjoying another ascent, which is expected to last another three to four years — and Ultra supplies the Eurofighter, Nimrod and Airbus superjumbo projects.

But the Eurofighter and the superjumbo have yet to win production approval. Good timing will not protect Ultra's share price if one of the main projects is cancelled or delayed. Meanwhile, Ultra is on the acquisition trail. Rather than permanently teaming up with British or European partners in the current climate of consolidation, Ultra wants to build its own little empire. If all goes well, the rewards will be impressive — but so are the risks.

EDITED BY CARL MORTSHED

COMMODITIES

LIPPS			
	May	June	July
COCA	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
June	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
July	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Aug	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Sept	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Oct	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Nov	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Dec	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Jan	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Feb	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Mar	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Apr	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
June	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
July	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Aug	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Sept	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Oct	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Nov	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Dec	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Jan	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Feb	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Mar	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Apr	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
June	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
July	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Aug	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Sept	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Oct	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Nov	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Dec	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Jan	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Feb	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Mar	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Apr	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
June	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
July	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Aug	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
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Mar	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
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May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
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July	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Aug	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Sept	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Oct	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Nov	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Dec	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Jan	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Feb	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Mar	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
Apr	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120
May	1040-1080	1080-1100	1100-1120

THE TIMES



CITY DIARY

Election brief for solicitor

THOSE kind souls at McKenna have allowed one of their top solicitors temporary leave to fight the general election.

For the bulk of this month, until the day that the City law firm merges with Cameron Markby Hewitt, Shailesh Vara, 33, will be rallying for support as Conservative candidate for Birmingham Ladywood.

Described by Kenneth Clarke as "brilliant" and by Lord Alexander of Woodon as a potential prime minister, Vara is preparing to do battle with Clare Short MP, on the day that his firm becomes Cameron McKenna.

Vara's secretary, meanwhile, will be packing files into boxes on May 1, moving their office from Mitre Court to Sceptre Court.

Cover Price

AFTER an acquisitive year for Johnston Press, it was inevitable that the question of disposals would arise at yesterday's results meeting. Fred Johnston, chairman of the local newspaper publishers, who built up the family business and moved it to Edinburgh from its 19th century roots in Falkirk, took the opportunity to show that a proprietor can have a sentimental streak, as well as a sense of humour. Declining to rule out the possibility of shedding a title or two, he elaborated: "Everything has a price... except my wife's virtue and the publishing rights of The Falkirk Herald."



Armitt: the new chief executive at Costain

Switching sites

JOHN ARMITT was yesterday named Costain's new chief executive. After 26 years at John Laing Construction, he will succeed Alan Lovell, who announced his intention last December to leave Costain. John Neerhout will take over from Armitt as interim managing director of Union Railways.

PRICE Waterhouse helped to raise the roof yesterday at the Globe Theatre. The accountancy firm is sponsoring two columns, each hewn from a single oak timber, 28ft in height and weighing 1.5 tonnes, to support the roof above the stage.

Party food

SAFEWAY is encouraging its customers to vote with their mouths. In the deli section are packed-lunch varieties of "The Election Roll". There's "Red Leicester" for Blairites, "Sage Derby" for Green Party supporters, "Blue Cheese" for Tory voters, and less exotic "Double Gloucester" for Ashdown fans. And for the sophisticated palates of the Monarch Raving Loony Party? "Cheddar Cheese with Fruit Cake."

BRIAN WINTERFLOOD is troubled by the City's lack of charity. The managing director of Winterflood Securities sent out 300 sponsor forms to brokers across the Square Mile to support the firm's team running in the London Marathon and to raise money for Remedi, the medical trust charity. So far, he has received only 17 replies.

MORAG PRESTON

A hand-up for the have-nots or a handout from the haves

poverty as originally intended, we have relieved it at a cost now approaching £50 billion a year. That is a policy all parties now seem to agree is unsustainable.

Attacking poverty should therefore be the top priority. This is the essential prerequisite for spending proportionately more on any other worthy causes and desirable objectives, or for any lasting cut in the tax burden.

Most poor people are found among about half a dozen vast and richly varied groups: the retired, the unemployed, the sick, divorced or unmarried single parents, families with one low-wage earner and the distressed self-employed. They do not all need the same help. Nor are they all susceptible to aid, whether carrot or stick. Programmes to lift as many as possible out of poverty would need to range right across Whitehall, would be hard to target and often slow to make much impact.

Both Labour and Tories have intriguing if not fully formed long-term proposals to ensure that far more people have comfortable pensions of their own when they retire. Neither seems to have much to offer over the intervening 25 years.

There is more hope on unemployment.



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

The past few years have shown that the key is steady growth, and low inflation to keep growth steady. Allowing enterprises to build slowly and steadily is the key to a healthy labour market. Boom leading to labour shortages and bidding-up of wages is the inevitable prelude to recession. The more steady and unexciting the economy, the lower the rate of unemployment that can be sustained without rising inflation.

The present rate, though so much better than on the Continent, is still too high for the public finances to sustain indefinitely.

Labour's central anti-poverty measure is to use the unknown £x billion of utility taxes to shove 250,000 young people and long-term unemployed into the labour market through training, job subsidies or even voluntary work. Extra skills might be the best long-term benefit. Tories prefer cheap sticks.

Little is heard of a seemingly obvious reason for the demand for jobs to be greater than the supply. They are taxed. No wonder the market is distorted. To make matters worse, Employers' National Insurance Contributions (ENICs) are structured to give employers an incentive to convert secure, full-time jobs into low-paid part-time ones. Many have done. If Labour is to make any impact with a minimum wage, it should reform ENICs at the same time. Otherwise, it will not be able to set the minimum at a level that will make much impact on poverty for fear of costing jobs, in textiles and other vulnerable industries if not in catering.

Low wage rates would not look so inadequate, nor would wage subsidies be growing so fast, if poor people did not have their earned incomes taxed. A totally rational tax and social security system would ensure that no one was taxed on

earnings who needed means-tested benefits. Yet many pay tax and National Insurance at a combined 30 per cent, putting the deductions from any rise in earnings at more than 90 per cent. Tax starts too low and the tax system does not allow for need while the benefit system does.

Groups as normally sensible as the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Low Pay Unit still argue that needs should be covered by spending on benefits, rather than not taxing those in need (such as families) so much. This thinking has to change if poverty in the fiscal sense is to be prevented and the vicious circle converted into a virtuous one. A means-tested benefit is wholly inferior to a transfer. Any welfare spending is inferior to achieving the same result by tax cuts or allowances, even if the budgetary cost of tax aid is higher.

A two-parent family with one earner and two children should really not be taxed on less than about £11,000. John Major's proposal for fully transferable personal allowances would nearly achieve this, provided the married person's allowance is retained. But for the political incorrectness of the implied incentive for wives not to work, the reform would surely have been made several years ago. Without necessarily boosting their living standards, it could remove up to 700,000 families from the poverty trap, from indignity and from welfare benefits. Naturally, it will do nothing for other groups. The battle against poverty is only beginning. The more attention is focused on it the better.

Paul Durman says share price growth has outweighed the risk — so far

Biotech's potent investment formula

Conventional wisdom has it that over the next ten years biotechnology companies will create huge amounts of wealth from the drugs and medical devices they are developing. Conventional wisdom also states that these companies are the last place where private investors should look to invest their money.

The dangers are all too obvious. The share prices are volatile, falling and rising like yoyos. Most of the companies have modest sales, and are still running up substantial losses on the back of research and development spending. Stock market valuations running into hundreds of millions of pounds are supported, it often seems, by little more than promises of future success. With the companies defying conventional analysis, it is easy for cynics to suggest that the whole sector is riding on a bubble of hype and overoptimism.

Be this as it may, many biotech investors have done extremely well. If the definition is stretched to include companies such as Shire Pharmaceuticals and SkyePharma, 36 healthcare technology companies have floated in London, most of them in the past four years. As Erling Refsum, the Yamaichi analyst has observed, they are now sufficiently numerous to be able to take a portfolio approach.

According to calculations by The Times, an investor who had indiscriminately invested a £1,000 in each company as it came to the market would have made a profit of just over £50,000 on an initial outlay of £30,000. That is an impressive return from companies that have only been listed for an average of two-and-a-half years.

To put this in perspective, in the past two-and-a-half years, the FT-SE 100 index of Britain's leading companies has risen by about 34 per cent. A reliable performer like Marks & Spencer has increased in value by less than 13 per cent. Even the strong recovery at British Petroleum has produced a gain of only just over 70 per cent.

Of the 36 companies, 22 have enjoyed an increase in their share price, while 14 have lost money for their investors. The only complete failure was Anagen, which had developed a blood analysis system.

The tables show the top six and the bottom six performers.



Dr Ian Wilmut, of the Roslin Institute, which worked with PPL Therapeutics to clone Dolly the sheep, highlighting advances being made in the sector

The comparison makes the point that while the downside risk is limited by the size of the initial investment — £1,000 in our example — the potential returns can be several times this amount.

In general terms, the top performers are, unsurprisingly, the longest established companies. ML Laboratories originally joined the now defunct Third Market only a month after the 1987 stock market crash, giving it the longest track record. Its local kidney dialysis solution is already being sold through Baxter Healthcare and the company made a substantial profit for the first time last year.

Yet its shares (now 190p) have fallen to less than half last year's peak of 448p.

Snare Sin, deputy chief executive of ML Labs, said: "We've done something that the market does not know how to cope with. We've gone cash flow positive, we've recovered

all our R&D expenditure and we've posted a profit."

British Biotech is the sector giant. Its market value is £1.6 billion. Yet its pancreatic drug will not be launched before the end of this year, and its great hope, the marimastat cancer drug, is still in clinical trials.

Many new healthcare companies are still too far from market even to be considered by some US investors with more experience in biotech. Mike Yellen, who runs about \$850 million in healthcare money for CT Global, recently told *Global Fund Analysis* that early stage investments in biotech are simply bad investments.

He said: "It's very, very difficult to make any intelligent guesses about how later stage trials are going to work out, based on very early, small clinical trials. What happens again and again is that the story sounds great, the pre-clinical animal data looks great, the five-patient phase 1

safety dosing trial looks great. Then they step up to a larger trial and issues come up — side effect issues, or there is just no efficacy, or whatever."

How do UK investors justify these extraordinary valuations? And will the biotech companies continue to produce such high returns?

Industry analysts assess the scale of the target market for which the biotech companies are developing products, estimate the market share the new products will take, and then adjust for the risk of failure in development. This discounted cash flow modelling can produce misleadingly precise figures. In the words of Celtech's Peter Fellner, in reality it is no more than a "pseudo science".

The valuation estimates will depend enormously on the key assumptions that underpin it.

An analyst at one leading securities house yesterday said producing discounted cash flows for companies that may

not produce their first drugs before 2002 was a "fairly pointless exercise". On top of everything else, this approach ignores the value in the companies' underlying technology. Yet alternatives such as multiples of R&D spending seem even more flawed. "People are constantly struggling to get to grips with the valuations of these companies," the analyst said. "There is great difficulty and great subjectivity."

News flow — announcements about trials, new discoveries, and new research partnerships — is one of the main drivers of share prices. Companies that have no news for a few months often see their

shares slide. Investors draw confidence from the investments made by the leading pharmaceutical groups when they form strategic alliances with the drug development companies. Recently, Glaxo Wellcome has taken a stake in Cantab Pharmaceuticals, SmithKline Beecham and Medeva have bought into Pepide Therapeutics and Zeneca has invested in Xenova, all at prices at or around the market price. It is obviously reassuring to have such an endorsement from experts who are ideally placed to assess the real value of the biotech development projects.

Mr Sim, of ML Labs, suggests such alliances may have drawbacks for the new healthcare companies since the deals may weaken their negotiating position over royalty rights to their products. "Most people do not know the value of these deals," he said. "What price has been paid for that subscription in equity by a major?" He said the majors may seek to control future development spending, and may extract options over products. He added: "Unless you see the full deal, you didn't ought to get too excited."

Essentially, there are no simple answers in valuing biotech companies. Investors have to fall back on their judgment of management and their faith in the biotech companies' technology.

For what it's worth, those involved in the biotech industry seem evenly split on whether the quoted companies are over or undervalued. An informal poll at the recent BioIndustry Association conference sponsored by Ernst & Young divided evenly over the issue.

Hamish Hale, of Apex Partners, which has invested in ten biotech companies and never made a loss, said: "Some are overpriced, some are underpriced and some are just about right." He said there is no fundamental overvaluation. PPL Therapeutics, the gene therapy company made famous by cloning Dolly the sheep, was "really undervalued".

Dr Refsum says that with share prices so dependent on confidence, the new healthcare stocks would be badly hit by a serious fall in the wider stock market. So even though the underlying value of a biotech company is almost completely divorced from the economic cycle, its shares could be hurt by a rise in interest rates.

Dr Refsum, one of the biggest bulls of the sector, remains optimistic. "When confidence is at its lowest in these companies, that's the time to buy them." The strong recoveries that British Biotech, Celtech and Cantab have all made after apparently serious setbacks bear this out.

WINNERS...				
Company	First Trading	Flotation Price	Price at 31.3.97	Gain/Loss on £1,000
ML Laboratories	Nov 1987	14p	190p	£13,000.00
BioCompas Int.	April 1985	170p	1212.5p	£8,132.35
Shield Diagnostics	Sept 1993	112p	715p	£5,383.83
Corbion Int.	June 1994	44p	268.5p	£5,102.27
British Biotech	July 1992	42.5p	248.5p	£4,870.59
Oxford Molecular	April 1994	80p	408p	£4,100.00

...AND LOSERS				
Company	First Trading	Flotation Price	Price at 31.3.97	Gain/Loss on £1,000
Bioace	Nov 1993	130p	83.5p	£-257.69
Proetus Int.	May 1990	84p	52.5p	£-237.50
Oxford Biomedica	Dec 1996	88p	47.5p	£-460.23
Tepnel Life Sciences	Sept 1992	120p	64p	£-466.66
Electrophoresis Int.	Oct 1995	110p	53.5p	£-213.64
Anagen	June 1993	100p	0p	£-1,000.00

BUSINESS LETTER

Insurance business is in the blood for those who play the genetic card

From Mr Raymond Angel

Sir, Dr C. Gardner-Thorpe's letter dealing with the geneticists' confidentiality dilemma, in respect of insurance (February 13), indicates the substantial difficulties being created by the increasing use of new technology v privacy for individuals.

Last year, the Home Office conducted a consultation into the merit of establishing a National Identity Card for UK citizens. The proposal was to create a personal database, and from this information to issue to every individual an identity smartcard. The Registrar of Data Protection raised

many pertinent objections to the Home Secretary's proposal and seemingly, for the time being, the matter is on hold.

Dr Gardner-Thorpe's letter highlights the increasing use of personal data, medical history, genetic tests, etc. in the insurance business. Given the staggering advances in genetic/DNA testing techniques and the compilation of databases being made commercially available, it appears that we may not be too far away from a personal identity

smartcard being issued, shortly after the birth of an individual.

When, as required by law, a birth is registered and a National Insurance Number is given in the name of the person registered, it follows that an ID smartcard could be issued for that person's future use. For example, to claim medical care and treatment, it could also be used, later in life, to detail educational achievements, employment records, unemployment claims, state

pension benefit, right through to the issue of a death certificate.

Superimpose genetic details onto that person's ID smartcard, given that blood tests are conducted within days of birth, and all that would be required is the person's consent for any prospective insurer to access the database. Within minutes, an insurance proposal could be accepted, rejected or loaded — all with the magic of tomorrow's technology.

Yours faithfully,
RAYMOND ANGEL,
34 Lennox Close,
Southampton.

Letters intended for publication in the Business section of The Times can be sent by fax on 0171-782 5112

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Hewden is confident in spite of tough year

By CLARE STEWART

HEWDEEN STUART, the plant and tool hire group, suffered a fall in pre-tax profits, from £36.25 million to £29.45 million, in the year to January 31 but struck a more confident note for the current year.

Sandy Findlay, chairman and chief executive, said recovery in the construction industry will mean better trading conditions this year.

Mr Findlay added that more engineering and building companies are now moving away from ownership of mobile plant equipment and are looking instead to build trading relationships with hire groups such as Hewden Stuart.

The fall in profits was in line with the company's revised expectations. Last year the group's turnover fell to £276.5 million from £279.3 million.

Difficult market conditions knocked profits and margins in the hire business. The acquisition of Agent Plant from Kvaerner Group did not bring profits in its three months of ownership.

However, after its reorganisation it is expected to make a contribution in the current year.

Utilisation rates had improved from a low of 60 per cent, the group said, with hire rates also seen to be firming up.

Hewden Stuart has expanded its chain of hire depots, and further expansion is planned to increase the coverage, particularly in the south.

A 10 per cent drop in turnover in the group's merchandising division knocked profits back from £2.7 million to £1 million.

Gearing at the end of the year stood at 6.5 per cent after improvements in cashflow.

Hewden Stuart is paying a final dividend of 2.4p giving a total for the year of 3.2p, up from 3p previously. The shares rose 13p to 139½p.



Marco Chiappelli, left, finance director, Fred Johnston, centre, and Tim Bowdler reported profits at Johnston ahead of City expectations

Flat demand and tight margins squeeze Camas

By MARTIN BARROW

CAMAS, Britain's fifth-largest aggregates group, blamed flat demand for building materials and tight margins for a fall in sales and profits last year.

The company reported a decline in pre-tax profits to £22.8 million from £24.1 million for the year to December 31. Alan Shearer, chief executive, said trading was affected by a combination of the weak market conditions experi-

enced for several years in the UK, partly offset by a strong market in America.

Operating profits fell 5 per cent to £27 million on turnover that was unchanged at £407.7 million. Trading results include a profit of £900,000 in respect of the highway construction, maintenance and surfacing activities of CAMAS Associated Asphalt, which was sold in January 1997, and

£500,000 from acquisitions completed in the third and fourth quarters.

Mr Shearer said: "Our business in the US, benefiting from strong markets, has performed well and offset the lower results earned from our European operations, where the weak UK market adversely affected volumes."

"In continuing good markets in the US and the pick-up

in UK housing, 1997 has started well."

Shares of CAMAS rose 8½p to 81½p yesterday, against a 1996 high of 97p. Despite a fall in earnings to 5.11p (5.47p) a share, the company is paying an unchanged total dividend of 3.75p, maintaining the final payment at 25p.

Profits from European operations fell to £20.1 million (£23.3 million) after charging rationalisation costs of £1.5 million, compared with a £1.5 million charge in the previous year. Turnover fell 6 per cent to £283.8 million and trading margins rose to 7.1 per cent from 7.7 per cent.

Mr Shearer said the level of expenditure on UK roads was unlikely to provide an increase in demand in the coming year, but the improvement in the housing market in the final quarter of 1996 has continued into 1997. Markets in America enjoyed a period of sustained growth and all indications are that the strong market will continue throughout 1997.

Syrup tomorrow at Borthwicks

By OUR CITY STAFF

SHARES in Borthwicks, the food producer, rose 2½p, to 31½p, in spite of a warning that full-year pre-tax profits will be "marginally below" the lower end of expectations.

Borthwicks also said that it had received "a significant order" from a major new customer "in America to supply concentrated syrup for a

chocolate coffee food drink. The company said that it had originally expected to despatch part of this order in the year to March 29, but "delays in receiving the order have resulted in there being no contribution in that year, and as a result the directors currently expect to report profits before taxation marginally below the

lower end of market expectations".

Dependent on public reaction after the product rollout, the company had hopes for significant repeat orders. It added: "As a result of this order and improving conditions in the flavours markets, the board is confident about prospects for the year ending March 1998."

New titles help to lift Johnston

By FRANK LE DUC

JOHNSTON PRESS, the local newspaper publisher, said the outlook was encouraging as it reported full-year profits exceeding City expectations.

The rise in pre-tax profit to £24.1 million (£16.3 million) in the year to December 31 reflected acquisitions by the Edinburgh group, including the £215 million deal last July to buy Ennap's regional titles.

Underlying operating profit advanced to £18 million, from £17.2 million, while turnover rose from £102 million to £165 million.

Fred Johnston, chairman, said trading conditions had improved, with advertising growth reflecting the stronger national economy. Tim Bowdler, managing director, said the cost of newsprint in the current year was expected to be nearer 1995 levels. Margins had improved, but were still below Johnston's 25 per cent average.

The final dividend of 1.7p (1.5p) makes a total of 2.45p, up 14 per cent, adjusted for the rights issue last July. Earnings, excluding exceptional, rose to 9.76p (8.42p). The shares rose 5p to 191½p.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

EU approves £247m aid for Welsh firms

THE European Commission has approved UK state aid of £247 million to help to co-finance investment projects by L G Electronics Wales (LGEW) and L G Semicon Wales (LGSW), which are owned by LG Engineering, the South Korean industrial conglomerate.

LGEW is to invest £521 million in the creation of a television and computer monitor production plant, and later in the assembly of colour display tubes and colour picture tubes for monitors. LGSW, which operates in the semiconductor industry, plans to invest £1.1 billion in a plant. The Commission said the investments would not create overcapacity in the respective markets. It also noted that they would help to create 6,100 jobs in South Wales.

National Power project

NATIONAL POWER, the UK utility, has won its first big project in Indonesia as part of an international consortium that plans to build a \$1.6 billion coal-fired power station. The consortium signed a 30-year agreement under which Indonesia's state-owned electricity corporation will buy power from the 1,320MW plant. It is planned to be built on the northern coast of central Java. National Power's partners are Tomen of Japan and Bakrie Power and Maharam Paramitra of Indonesia.

Record start for Liffe

THE London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (Liffe) traded a record 51,333,462 futures and options contracts during the first quarter of this year, representing a 10 per cent increase over the first quarter of 1996. It was the first time quarterly turnover exceeded 50 million contracts. In March, Liffe traded 16.58 million contracts, with average daily volume of 872,429 contracts, representing an average daily nominal turnover of £187.04 billion.

Yorkshire Water charge

YORKSHIRE WATER will take a £2.7 million exceptional charge against the disposal of Fospor, its specialist water treatment business, to Ashland UK, a subsidiary of Ashland of America, for £5.3 million. The charge is mainly because of the cost of goodwill on the original purchase in 1991. The disposal follows a strategic review of non-regulated activities in 1996 and the prioritising of solid and liquid waste, clinical waste and environmental analysis at Yorkshire Environmental.

Benchmark acquisition

BENCHMARK, the property investment and development group, has exchanged contracts to acquire the leasehold of two London properties for £30 million. Benchmark is acquiring an office block and 42 apartments, near Vauxhall Bridge, from the Universities Superannuation Scheme. Both properties have about 82 years of unexpired leasehold. Benchmark said the consideration implies an initial yield of 9 per cent.

Verity licensing deal

SHARES in Verity, the electronic equipment group, rose 54p to 534½p after the company announced that its New Transducers unit has signed a cross-licensing agreement with Noise Cancellation Technologies Inc (NCTI) for flat loudspeaker technology. NCTI will sub-license the joint intellectual property in the automotive and transportation sectors and will pay a proportion of its royalty income to New Transducers.

Rulebook for an ideal world

Paul Rutteman looks at some of the issues raised by the quest for an international set of standards

In an ideal world, companies quoted on one stock exchange could seek other listings without having to produce different sets of accounts. But it is not an ideal world and UK companies listed in New York have to file a reconciliation statement with the Securities Exchange Commission showing what their profits and shareholders' equity would be if US accounting principles had been used instead of UK accounting standards.

It is not so bad for UK companies because, for most, the capital available through the London Stock Exchange is sufficient for their needs. For capital hungry German and French companies, it is a different matter. Their stock exchanges are less liquid and they must seek their capital elsewhere — usually New York — and that involves preparing the second set of accounts required by the SEC.

All of that is set to change in 1998 when the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC) is due to complete its "core" standards required by the International Organisation of Securities Commissions as a prerequisite for a single filing requirement. The SEC has taken a leading role in encouraging the IASC to accelerate its programme to produce these core standards, and expectations are high that once these are complete com-

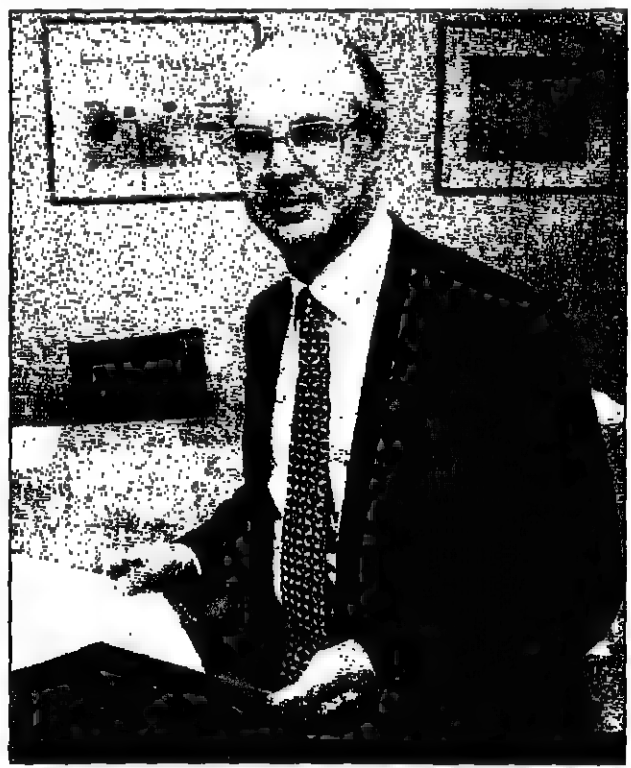
panies can use just one set of accounts for their filings anywhere in the world, including the US. Of course, that implies that the international standards must be acceptable for local use too, and that could cause problems for UK companies if those core standards differ significantly from UK standards.

However, there are significant problems for the IASC too. Its proposals are significant and controversial. The deadline is close and difficult to achieve without cutting much-needed discussion. The IASC needs to manage its timetable carefully and UK companies, among others, need to watch those proposed standards that can have significant effects on the way they do business.

Does it matter if the timetable slips? A six-month slipage may not matter, but much more and companies may lose patience and adopt US accounting principles.

In developing the core standards, IASC has had to dispense with optional treatments included in earlier standards and this has usually meant that the new standards are more like US standards than UK standards. This happened with deferred tax and is likely to happen with the proposed standard on employee benefit costs — essentially pension costs.

The more serious concern in this proposal relates to defined



Paul Rutteman highlights the need for more debate

benefit (for final salary) schemes which, most UK companies have. They are likely to have to report liabilities which are artificial and volatile to a degree that may cause them to switch to defined contribution (money payment) schemes instead. Such a change may well prove unpopular with employees who like to know whether they will have a sufficient pension when they retire rather than that their pension is dependent on the success, or otherwise, of investments in which the contributions have been put.

Why will this happen? The

problem is that E54 (the relevant exposure draft) will result in volatile balance sheet liabilities because it takes a short-term view of asset returns and interest rates. Each year the pension scheme assets have to be valued at market value and the liability for future pensions discounted at a risk-free rate of return. Asset values can rise and fall rapidly in speculative markets and the long-term risk-free rate of return can move significantly from year to year also (just look at Italian government bonds over the past year). A pension fund is

accepted as a reasonable excuse. Nothing is certain except death and taxes.

TAXAID is the charity that aims to provide free tax advice to people who cannot afford professional help. One of the ways it funds this is by running conferences that aim to help tax advisers. The next one is on April 25 and should provide a guide to all anyone needs to know about the onset of self-assessment. Details on 0171 624 5216.

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rarely invested in risk-free assets. It will more typically have a large proportion of equities. An actuary, in calculating the funding rate needed to meet the ultimate liability, will take that into account, unlike E54. A pension fund may thus be fully funded according to the scheme's actuary, but the company's accounts will show an increasing pension liability.

The accounting proposed in E54 for defined benefit schemes can be said to distort balance sheets and distort them in an unpredictable way. For those companies already contemplating switching to defined contribution schemes, this may be the clinching factor.

There are two further points that should not be overlooked. First, the SEC will not be satisfied with just a core set of standards in place. It requires a mechanism to be in place for interpreting those standards. Already there are indications that the standards do not mean the same thing to all companies in all countries. The Standard Interpretations Committee of the IASC, which meets for the first time this week, is the proposed solution to that issue. It is a kind of Urgent Issues Task Force and consists of a number of well-qualified individuals, but it is a significant job. They have a lot to do.

Finally, the SEC is looking for a vigorous international enforcement mechanism. No solution has been put forward. In practice, for companies coming to New York for capital, the SEC will do much of the enforcement. Companies that fail to comply will not attain access. Presumably (but less obviously so) similar enforcement measures will be applied by other stock exchanges or securities commissions. The result will be an uncoordinated enforcement system. There is room for something like our own Financial Review Panel. The principal sanction will be the ability to make public any deficiencies discovered. The threat of litigation in the home country would be a useful add-on, but perhaps too ambitious for the present. However, more debate will be needed — and soon.

Paul Rutteman is partner with the Financial Services Office of Ernst & Young.

Revenue shifts burden of work to the taxpayer

IN THE first few days of next week the full effect of the changeover to tax self-assessment will become apparent. The opening days of the tax year will see some 8.5 million tax returns arriving on the nation's doormats. For everyone concerned it will be a new concept. It will be a new and redesigned tax form. And for a large proportion of recipients it will be the first time that they have had to sort anything like this out.

The concept of self-assessment is easy to understand and the new forms are relatively clear. But tax, whatever forms and methods are used for collection, is bound to be complex. For those who have well-ordered tax affairs and employ an adviser there should be few problems. But the self-assessment net has widened the numbers of those who have to take responsibility for their tax affairs. In the old days, an uncomplicated taxpayer on the PAYE system hardly noticed anything, except the tax being removed. Now anyone with taxable benefits has to sort it out with the Inland Revenue.

Suddenly, people are going to be faced with complicated decisions and the need for advice. Overnight a huge market will open up for cheap, cheerful, but effective tax advice. There are three obvious sources for this. The banks could knock out a form-based service. Small accountancy firms could do likewise. There are no regulations about who can and who cannot call themselves tax advisers.

In the US, where self-assessment is the norm, a huge industry of good, swift and cheap tax advice is available. But it has grown up over years. Here, in year one, there is likely to be chaos. Already the banks, having made noises about being interested in the market, are starting to pull out. The idea of a centralised system has foundered as people sought to gain tax advice across a desk in a local branch. The cost structure of a tax service provided by the banks depended on swift and easy central processing of tax returns. They were not going to make money if the service had to include specific help at a local level.

The market will be left to organisations such as the British Taxpayers Association, which has formed an alliance of accountancy firms. It provides the documentation and the tax work. Through that arrangement it boasts 250 partners and 1,250 professional staff available to carry out the basic tax service for which it intends to charge about £60. That is almost three times what the "no-frills" service would cost in the US. But that

probably owes much to differences in consumer culture and a mature market. People in the US tend to insist on quality at a dirt-cheap price. In the UK, consumers tend to associate a high price with high quality and consequently are happy to pay much higher prices than in the US.

But as the message of self-assessment sinks in, we will see the arrival of independent high street tax shops and, in a totally unregulated marketplace, we will start to hear tales of incompetence and disasters. The tax advisory industry has tried to do something about this. A report was commissioned by the Chartered Institute of Taxation and TaxAid, the tax advice charity. That suggested that rogue advice and its consequences did exist and the suggestion was made that some sort of regulation was required. But the practicalities are harder. Another report was commissioned to examine the lessons that could be learnt from the relevant 100 worst cases that had come before the accountancy profession's regulatory systems. This is due to be published next month. It is likely to conclude that most accountancy firms are disciplined because they are managerially rather than technically incompetent. People who receive bad advice often receive it because the adviser's own business is a shambles. It is hard to separate an inability to run a business from an inability to advise properly on tax. As a result, it is hard to insist on regulation of advisers if it is not likely to improve the quality of advice.

But the most alarming change that is likely to hit taxpayers is the switch to random audits. From next Monday morning the Inland Revenue has the power to descend on taxpayers and investigate their tax affairs. "Taxpayers", as Ernst & Young put it in its survey of Revenue audit powers last autumn, "whose affairs are in order will not be told that they are being investigated for purely statistical reasons." And if such an investigation is detailed, as it is likely to be, the taxpayer will find that the sheer cost of arguing his or her case is on the large side. The fee to an adviser for helping out during the investigation is not going to be £60.

And that is likely to be the real impact of self-assessment. In the past, the relatively small number of people who had complex tax affairs, or were self-employed, paid for advice because they felt it was necessary. Now a large number of people are going to have to pay for advice simply because the Inland Revenue has shifted its burden of work from tax gatherer to taxpayer.



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Tax advice that began at sea

TAX self-assessment has meant a scramble among tax advisers to provide help to beleaguered taxpayers as they become inundated with tax forms when the new tax system and tax year start next week. The British Taxpayers Association has been repackaged for the occasion. Now it aims to provide help through a network of accountancy firms throughout the land. But its origins lie aboard Admiral

Excused by death

Jellicoe's flagship during the First World War. A quarter-master started doing the tax computations for the fleet in the Black Sea and continued with the business once back on dry land. Even now it claims to have a few retired rear-admirals on its books.

THERE has been much argument over the advice that the

0171 624 5216

Equities stage a recovery

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1997	Low	Company	Price	High	1997	Low	Company	Price	High	
High	Low	Company	Price	High	High	Low	Company	Price	High	
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES										
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70	71	5000 Brand	59	66	135	70	71	5000 Brand	59	66
71	72	5000 Brand	59	66	135	71	72	5000 Brand	59	66
72	73	5000 Brand	59	66	135	72	73	5000 Brand	59	66
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■ FILM 1

Colin Firth, freed from Mr Darcy's breeches, turns in an appealing performance in the new *Fever Pitch*



■ FILM 2

The French film, *A Self-Made Hero*, dares to poke fun at the German Occupation and the French Resistance

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ FILM 3

Wildly exaggerated violence, and a fascination with disfigurement, mar the Japanese film *Tokyo Fist*



■ DANCE

Darcey Bussell and Igor Zelensky form the perfect partnership in the Royal Ballet revival of *La Bayadere*

CINEMA: It's one-nil to the Arsenal as the laddish charm of *Fever Pitch* wins over even football-hating Geoff Brown

You are watching men united

Standing in my back garden some Saturday afternoons, I can hear the crowd's roar at the Arsenal stadium in Highbury, half a mile away. Hell on earth, it sounds like. I hate all sport, and always have done. Why, then, did I have a good time at *Fever Pitch*, the film adaptation of Nick Hornby's book, chronicling his obsession with Arsenal Football Club? What was so appealing about Colin Firth, freed from Mr Darcy's breeches, acting the chauvinistic bloke, swapping football lore with his mates, wearing Arsenal boxer shorts, and bellowing on the terraces?

Ignorance helped. Not having read Nick Hornby's autobiographical book, I was not to know that Colin Firth's fine head of curls bore no resemblance to the author's bald pate, or, more crucially, that the film's romance between Firth and Ruth Gemmell, fellow teacher at a north London comprehensive school, was invented to provide a peg for thoughts, jokes and dialogue previously filtered through the match reports that filled the book's pages.

"If someone else had taken these liberties, I probably would have been appalled," Hornby writes in his introduction to the published screenplay. But he was the scriptwriter, and he knew well enough that the film's conventional structure, flecked with flashbacks to the hero's childhood in a broken home, still allowed room for the book's concerns and rampant good humour.

The film's sheer friendliness is its most endearing feature. Director David Evans, a recruit from British television, may use the big screen timidly — this is a film of small details and surface realism — but he knows how to smuggle up to his characters, no matter how maddening their behaviour. In some respects *Fever Pitch* is not about football at all; it is about being a fanatic, and the way an obsession bends lives and relationships out of shape. Here is where Gemmell's Sarah Hughes comes in useful, as a foil and yardstick. Joining Firth's school just as Arsenal begin the 1988-89 season, she begins as a strict disciplinarian, exasperated by her colleague's lax ways. Falling in love and getting pregnant bring no revolutionary change: she remains incredulous at Firth's fixation, while he feels free to accuse her of having no soul. "Perhaps one day," he says, "you'll learn to care about something you can't tick."

Acting more energetically than usual, Firth makes his Arsenal devotee appear both aggravating and attractive; while Gemmell persuasively shows us a teacher whose ordered exterior hides unfulfilled needs. In truth, the pair never appear a likely match and, as the baby looms and Arsenal's fortunes reach their climax, *Fever Pitch* drifts away from realism towards the tidy solutions of fantasy. But it's far too late to complain: we have basked too pleasantly in the film's ebullience, generous heart and delight in the follies of life.

A Self-Made Hero gives much pleasure too, though of a more complicated kind. Here is a French film that dares to poke into the uncomfortable area of the German Occupation and the myth of the Resistance, and dares to treat events as a matter for ironic comedy. The hero, one Albert Dehoussé, begins as a provincial nobody who arrives in Paris after



Colin Firth — or, at any rate, his Gunners boxer shorts — and Ruth Gemmell in a scene from Nick Hornby's ebullient adaptation of his own bestseller, *Fever Pitch*

the Liberation in 1944 and creates a new identity as a valiant Resistance hero.

It suits the higher echelons to believe him. Dehoussé's imposture is so convincing that he is appointed to responsible positions, scouring France for traitors and supervising mop-up operations in Germany. We want Dehoussé to succeed too, for the actor Matthieu Kassovitz (the powerful director of *La Haine*) bends us round his little finger with his mixture of naivety and guile.

This is the second film to be directed by the screenwriter Jacques Audiard. The density of the film's ideas and the wealth of dialogue point to his background. But he is no mere slave to the words of the script (adapted from a novel

by Jean-François Deniau). He knows images too: he plays with them, shapes them gracefully, and whisks us with a magician's flourish between different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that comprise Dehoussé's life. Paris of the film feels like mock documentary: there are contemporary interviews with colleagues and witnesses, photographed straight to camera. And, just in case we get lulled into accepting fictions as facts, Audiard bridges some scenes with shots of musicians recording the film's soundtrack.

But there is nothing coldly intellectual about this cat's cradle of lies, evasions and illusions. *A Self-Made Hero* barrels along, popular and highbrow both at once, always alert to the comic potential of

Dehoussé's charade. When he gatecrashes a Resistance reception in the early days, he walks in, charmingly, carrying his own wine glass. By the end, the lies have built up into a labyrinth. He becomes trapped, and since we spectators have willingly complied in the game, we watch him wriggling with as much pain as amusement. Kassovitz, scarcely off screen, revels in the party's subtleties; and the company around him, including Ariouk Grinberg, Sandrine Kiberlain and Jean-Louis Trintignant, pitch in with vim and vigour. This is a film of many layers, and rich rewards.

Not so *Hard Men*, a British entry in the Imitation Tarantino stakes, which wrongly assumes that splashes of spurious visual

style, lashings of words beginning with f and enormous injections of violence can compensate for a paltry script and a lack of directorial control. The chap at the helm is J. K. Amalou, French by birth, but with 15 years in London under his belt time enough for him to learn how to write coarse English like "Kiss me where I poo".

When not displaying their language skills, the three Mafia henchmen spend their time trawling London's sleaziest locations, blasting opponents dead, and arguing. The chief bone of contention is one of their number, Tone, who wishes to hang up his gun now that his former girlfriend has presented him with a daughter. Instead of mouthing foul threats, he starts to coo "Da da" into his mobile phone.

The situation is pregnant with comedy. You could even get tender feelings involved. But Amalou's script rips all developments in the bud, and the director seems too busy parading his ambitions to notice. Actors involved include Vincent Regan, Ross Boatman and Lee Ross: they deserve better.

Good taste returns with *Green on the Screen*, a leading attraction in *Green on the Screen*, one of the strands in the Barbican Centre's Irish arts season. Too much good taste, almost: you long for a break in the

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Fever Pitch
Odeon West End, 15, 100 mins
Agreeable screen transplant of Nick Hornby's book

A Self-Made Hero
Curzon Mayfair, 15, 105 mins
Captivating French tale of a bogus Resistance hero

Hard Men
ABC Piccadilly, 18, 87 mins
Bad British Tarantino

Green on the Screen
Barbican Cinema
Wide-ranging season of Irish cinema

Tokyo Fist
ICA Cinema, 18, 87 mins
Eye-pummelling Japanese madness

mournful tread of Cathal Black's film, with its tone of exquisite misery, its careful photography of village faces, freshwater lakes and faded wallpaper.

The time is 1952. One man's son, an emigrant to America, comes back dead from the war in Korea. Another man's son fights to avoid a similar fate. There is decent acting and atmosphere galore; but the film cannot shake off the shroud of undue seriousness.

Finally, *Tokyo Fist*: an onslaught of pummeling hands, pulped and pierced flesh, and spurring blood from Shinya Tsukamoto, the Japanese cyberpunk king, revered particularly for *Tetsuo II: Body Hammer*. Fans should be pleased, if no one else. The plot describes a simple love triangle; but there is nothing simple about the lurching camerawork, the blue-rinse photography, the erotic overtones, the wildly exaggerated violence and fascination with body disfigurement. The trio's weaker male member is played, plaintively, by Tsukamoto himself, while his brother portrays the tough rival. They must lead an interesting family life.

'Superb victory'

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

■ **FEVER PITCH**
Damian Samuels, 19: Rarely has the word "Arsenal" been more entertaining.

Tim Thornton, 21: An exciting soccer romp that really hits the spot. A superb victory for Colin Firth.

Sarah Crook, 18: The country has a passion for football and will have a passion for *Fever Pitch*.

Leslie Isaiah Thomas, 18: Macho nonsense.

■ **HARD MEN**

Damian: A laughable London crime story that should find a home in video hell.

Time: In true Tarantino style.

SNAP VERDICT

this film has fast guns, fast cars and fast dialogue.

Sarah: An enjoyable, well-acted yarn. Lee Ross is one to look out for.

Leslie: Rather disappointing.

■ **A SELF-MADE HERO**

Damian: Martin Guerre meets *A French Camp* in a well-written film.

Time: Don't be put off by the subtitles. This film was *très bon*.

Sarah: Moving and rich.

Leslie: Matthieu Kassovitz gives a most delicate, sensitive performance.

Finding the perfect man

DARCEY BUSSELL added another name to her list of leading roles this week, but she wasn't quite able to claim it as her own. She also added another name to her list of leading men, and found herself the perfect partner in the self.

The occasion was her debut as Nikiya in the Royal Ballet's current revival of *La Bayadere*: the new man was Igor Zelensky, the Kirov-bred star of New York City Ballet.

Zelensky is over here for six weeks — he dances Romeo to Bussell's Juliet later this month — to partner Covent Garden's tallest female star. Bussell has not enjoyed the

best of luck where her imported partners are concerned. The elegant American, Robert Hill, had to cut short his Royal Ballet stay when injury sidelined him some years ago; the Hungarian Zoltan Solymosi was sacked after an unhappy five years.

How permanent the Zelensky-Bussell partnership will turn out to be is still an unknown, but on the evidence of this one performance theirs is a match made in heaven. Their physical compatibility is remarkable, his strength more than equal to the enormous scope of her dancing; while their attitudes as performers are perfectly in tune, both liking to take risks with the choreography.

Bussell's Nikiya is demure and very pretty indeed, but that isn't quite enough. There is a lot of emotional ground for Nikiya to cover in the first act — from piety to romantic rapture, from rage to betrayal and ultimately death — and Bussell's arsenal of dramatic weapons is not varied enough to encompass such a huge range. Nikiya's back-bending monologue of grief in the garden scene revealed that Bussell has not yet found the key to tugging at our heart strings.

But her dancing on Monday night was lovely. No one describes wider arcs of dance than Bussell does, and the sensuousness of her musical phrasing — and the way she

DANCE

La Bayadere
Covent Garden



Darcey Bussell makes her debut as Nikiya in *La Bayadere*

played with time, outlining familiar movements in unfamiliar ways — made the interpretation uniquely her own. And when paired with Zelensky's Solor, she came alive with the sheer physical excitement of letting go into the choreography.

Zelensky is big and beefy, and fiercely aristocratic in that very Russian way. His Solor was full of fire and bravado,

and acted with a lusty confidence that worked well within the context of *Bayadere's* melodrama. His technique is absolutely stunning: immaculate, open and breathtakingly generous. He sailed across the Covent Garden stage in spacious leaps, and then amazed us even further with his impossibly cushioned landings.

DEBRA CRAINE

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CHOICE 1

Siân Phillips stars as Marlene in Pam Gens's stage-bio of Dietrich

VENUE: Previewing from tonight at the Lyric Theatre



CHOICE 2

Michael Collins is showing as part of the Green on the Screen film season

VENUE: From tonight at the Barbican Cinema

THE TIMES ARTS



CHOICE 3

The Cheltenham International Jazz Festival welcomes Courtney Pine

VENUE: From tonight at venues in Cheltenham



NEW VIDEOS

Mira Nair's sensitive saga of Cuban immigrants in Miami, *The Perez Family*, is out now

Jarmusch runs wild in the West

NEW ON VIDEO

DEAD MAN PolyGram, 18, 1995
STRIKING if languorous existential western from Jim Jarmusch, with Johnny Depp as an innocent at large in a frontier world of small-town grunge, vicious hired guns and philosophical Indians. Robby Muller's dazzling black-and-white photography is a constant delight; and if boredom creeps up as Depp's wanted man travels to his destiny with Gary Farmer's lone Indian, you can only admire Jarmusch's tenacity in sticking to his stylistic guns. Expect some startling cameos along the way, including one from Robert Mitchum. Available to rent.

THE PEREZ FAMILY Film Four, 15, 1996
COLOURFUL if incoherent saga about love, hope and longing among Cuban immigrants in Miami. Immigrants such as Alfred Molina, a plantation owner freed from 20 years in jail, and Marisa Tomei's Dottie, life force and prostitute, Indian director Mira Nair shows her usual sensitivity towards cultural outsiders; she also dithers and drags her heels, shifting between warm comedy and hectic melodrama. For all the foot-tapping Cuban music, the film is best when it plays pianissimo. Available to rent.

ATTACK! MGM/UA, PG, 1956
NORMAN BROOKS's all-male play *The Fragile Fox*, about an American infantry group fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, provides an excellent showcase for director Robert Aldrich's forceful style. High-pitched performances from Jack Palance and Eddie Albert as two officers at loggerheads. The American War Department took a



Wanted men: Gary Farmer (left) and Johnny Depp in Jim Jarmusch's languorous western, *Dead Man*

dim view of the script's cynical tone, and declined to co-operate with the film-makers.

THE DAY OF THE TRIFIDS Second Sight, 15, 1962
IN 1960 John Wyndham's novel *The Midwich Cuckoos* was turned into a chilling British sci-fi movie called *Village of the Damned*. His *Trifids* saga was not so lucky, suffering from a fraught production, variable acting,

and a particularly weak ending. Some sequences carry the right nightmare feeling, as when Howard Keel finds everyone else in London buried by meteors. The *Trifids* themselves (plants turned man-eaters) are worth an indulgent smile.

SCANNERS Arrow, 18, 1981
THOSE awaiting the British release of *Crash* may like to while away the

hours with this earlier shocker from David Cronenberg, a tale of a battle for mind control, starring Jennifer O'Neill and Stephen Lack. Behind the spectacular gory special effects lie interesting ideas about the use of science and the state machine, though the film does not realise them properly. *The Brood* (1979), a far less digestible Cronenberg movie, is also available.

GEOFF BROWN

NEW CLASSICAL CDs: Fluent French songs, a long-lived Dane, and some Irish Victoriana

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REVERIES

Melodies françaises

McNair/Vignoles

Philips 446 656-2-A* £15.49

THOSE who find Sylvia McNair's soprano just a little too soft-edged in Baroque and Classical repertoire may well warm to her singing in another favoured area: that of French song. This sensitively programmed recital starts with some of the most languorous eddies in the business: Paul Verlaine's vowels, making each of Debussy's

ARISTES outbursts more a sigh than a song. Her performance is focused by the sensitive stage-management of Roger Vignoles, whose piano-playing creates a thrilling evocation of circling fairground horses in *Chevaux de bois*.

A subtle new wash of colour enters McNair's voice for Debussy's two *Aquarelles*, *Green*

and *Spleen*, before four songs by Bizet, including the coy dramatic miniature *The Ladybird* and the fashionably exotic *Arab Hostess's Farewell*. Messiaen's early *Trois Mélodies*, settings of two of his own poems and one by his mother, are given a welcome airing, meeting the world-weary languor of Debussy further downstream, as it were.

Smiling, fluent performances of three of Fauré's dreams of love, and a selection of Fauré's mordant *Banalités* and *Métamorphoses* complete this generous recital.

STAN WALES (15): The movie milestone returns, with four extra minutes. With Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford, director George Lucas.

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Indefatigable prophet of a scientific age

Stephen Jay Gould admires the genius who brought science to the masses

Most of his seven siblings died in madness, poverty, alcoholism, or the disgrace of scandal and exile. His father taught mathematics to the future Cardinal Newman, but the school then failed, and the elder Huxley took his family to Coventry and a life of poverty, however middle-class in status. Such circumstances of nature and nurture might not have predisposed T. H. Huxley for his actual career of genius and accomplishment, but such preeminent achievement can arise from any social condition or family background. Hardly anything seems less predictable than the course of an individual's life from the circumstances of his birth.

Nonetheless, the times also call forth the man, though we can never tell which man will seize the ring. Thus, evolutionary theory would have triumphed during the 19th century if Darwin had never been

HUXLEY
Evolution's High Priest
By Adrian Desmond
Michael Joseph, £20
ISBN 0 7181 3832 1

born — but under what different circumstances and with what divergent results? Similarly, the great social transformation of late 19th-century British intellectual life — the decline of an Oxbridge Anglican aristocracy that shunned the "vulgarity" of science, and the rise of scientific professionalism from a middle class abetted by dissent and industrialisation — would have occurred even without Huxley. But modernity would have experienced a much different and far less interesting birth without the presence of T. H. Huxley as such a brilliant, effective, and indefatigable midwife.

I have a particular reason for beginning my review with this commentary on Marx's famous observation that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please." Among historians of 19th-century British science, Adrian Desmond reigns as the current master of studies in social context as a necessary matrix of all intellectual innovation.

He wrote a brilliant book, *The Politics of Evolution*, to situate this subject in its previously unexamined context of extensive utilisation by agitators and reformers, whose means of expression (broadside, ephemeral pamphlets etc.) so rarely get preserved in scholarly libraries (and whose influence can therefore become invisible to later generations). With James Moore, he then wrote a wonderful biography of Charles Darwin, again focusing on the social and political conditions of Victorian life that made such an achievement possible for a man with great social advantages of wealth and class, but with so little apparent intellectual promise in his schoolboy years.

In completing his two volume biography of T. H. Huxley (volume one, *Huxley: The Devil's Disciple* appeared in 1994), Desmond has



Contemporary caricature of Huxley on London's School Board: he made science part of the curriculum

beautifully consummated the marriage of his unique skills with their ideal subject. Has anyone ever been both more right for a context and more constructed by the opportunity — the central dialectic of greatness, after all — than T. H. Huxley (Churchill and Lincoln come to mind, but their defining moments were shorter)? No one could speak, argue, reason, badger or persuade like Huxley. No one could match his marital commitment and his steely conviction. No religious fervour ever exceeded the secular zeal of this man who invented the word "agnostic" for his own convictions.

He smote Wilberforce on evolution. Owen on the hippocampus. Gladstone on the literacy of Genesis: he constructed science as a profession available to educated people of all classes by chairing dozens of government committees on educational reform and allied subjects, serving as president of nearly all major scientific societies, and writing scores of essays in a prose style equal to that of the best Victorian novelists. He also enjoyed a singularly happy marriage and, following the tragic death of a beloved son, raised his seven other children to happy and productive lives, mostly in the arts.

But, ironically, Huxley's passionate engagement in his social context

brought both enduring influence for his successful career and relative eclipse for his persona. The concept of celebrity must always face this paradox. A person with a great idea (who can attach his name thereto by a memorable act or document) lives forever, both in myth and biography — the just fate of Darwin. A person who shepherds every major reform through governmental committees, and who slays every source of reaction in brilliant but ephemeral debate, may influence (and ameliorate) millions of lives for countless generations to come, but may fade to relative anonymity when his contemporaries die and no one remembers his guiding light — the unfair fate of Huxley.

No one has understood the relative "scaling" of fame across generations better than Umberto Eco, whose medieval Sherlockian sleuth, William of Baskerville, solves the crime in *The Name of the Rose* because only he (and the criminal) understand that an apparently small thing (the only surviving copy of a book by Aristotle) can be crucial on a scale of centuries, while immediately overwhelming issues (the schism of the papacy between Rome and

Avignon) will not even be remembered in generations to come.

Caught in this bias, we write our biographies about the Darwins who endure for ages, and neglect the Huxleys who also forged our history, but whose personal light could not continue to burn as brightly as their influence. How else can we explain the skewed history of scholarship that has erected (with eminent justice) a "Darwin industry" capped by a dozen fine biographies, each different and each full of insight, but had produced not a single major modern biography of T. H. Huxley before Desmond's work? And how can we possibly understand the absence of a biography for either of the two most invisible yet essential players in the great Victorian drama of evolution: the brilliant and individualistic, if conventionally supportive wives, Henrietta Huxley and Emma Darwin. The records and documents exist in abundance. We will never understand this cardinal event in human history, this sweetest victory of human knowledge, until we spread the net of biography across all legitimate scales of influence.

Stephen Jay Gould's *Millennium* will be published by Cape in the autumn.

Michael Hofmann enjoys a rattling good anthology

Delightful satchel stuffed with treats

THE SCHOOL BAG

Edited by
Seamus Heaney
and Ted Hughes
Faber, £12.99
ISBN 0 571 17751 4

In 1985, Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes edited their first anthology together, *The Rattle Bag*. It was an inspired and unlikely mixture of old favourites, translations, pieces from the vernacular and the exotic. The order was any old how, there was no apparatus to speak of, and if you were looking for an anthology to enthuse beginners or non-readers, this was the one.

The *School Bag* is even better. It may sound more designing and thus less attractive — you have a sinking feeling you know what's in a school bag: in a rattle bag you have no idea — but don't be misled by that. The new book is just as delightful, but it also shoulders its responsibilities: I know of no better one-volume account of poetry in English.

What makes Heaney and Hughes such compelling anthologists is firstly the fact that they have no peers as poets; both are writing at their absolute peak (see Heaney's *The Spirit Level* and the poems at the end of Hughes's *Selected*); both have written extensively about poetry, Heaney in essays and lectures, Hughes in his books on Shakespeare, Eliot and Coleridge both are branching out into translation (Heaney of *Beowulf*, Hughes of *Ovid*); their combined authority is thus — perhaps surprisingly — much greater than it was even a dozen years ago.

Then there is the way they complement one another — "when one man casts, the other gathers" as Heaney wrote in a poem to Hughes about fishing together — the Irishman and the Yorkshireman, matching each other old for old and new for new, Heaney, I would say, always heading for the centre, Hughes for the margins. *The School Bag* lives — and so many anthologies are dead — as a vibrant argument between two superb equals.

Most anthologies strangle themselves by their own bootlaces. Defining themselves by their exclusions, they become essentially defensive, negative books, and are read in a negative spirit: who's not in this, who's under-represented, who's over-represented. You can't read *The School Bag* in this way; it seems to be bursting at the seams: not only poetry in English, but also in (or from) Old English.

Old Scots, Irish, Welsh. Over 50 pieces are by Anonymous. And yet at the other end, there are living poets — and these, by wonderful editorial grace, are not the usual suspects, Ashbery or Walcott or Gunn or Rich, but often older poets of lesser prominence, Judith Wright, Allen Curnow, Kathleen Raine, Stanley Kunitz.

What makes the book, though, is having each poet represented by one poem or extract. This has the effect, straightaway, of cutting out all the usual fussy disputes. Instead of grousing about who's in, who's out, and reading the book with a pair of callipers, one has to marvel at what it has accommodated. Here are, first of all, the unget-roundable lyric masterpieces of English poetry, Wyatt's *They flee from me* and Drayton's *Since there's no help*; here are Donne's *Valediction* and Henry King's *Eccequy*; Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*; Arnold's *Dover Beach* and Dylan Thomas's *Fern Hill*.

Then there is a group of longer poems whose length would not normally permit them to appear in a book of this size. Yet here they

are: the whole of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, of Milton's *Lycidas*, of the *Pardoner's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales*, the first Canto of *Ezra Pound*. And where things are excerpted, it is done with wonderful generosity: seven pages of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (in a boisterous translation by Hughes); seven pages from Golding's *Ovid*; long excerpts from *King Lear* and *Doctor Faustus*; 20 pages from Whitman's *Song of Myself*; 12 each of *In Memoriam* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

All this is brilliant making room, one would have to say. But nothing seems to have paid! What's missing? Lovelace, Collins, Poe, Thoreau, Sassoon, H.D., James Wright — nothing really crucial. Whereas against that, how much there is that I never expected to see or never saw before at all: Weldon Kees's poem on the history of the umbrella, Stephen Crane's *In the Desert*, Samuel Johnson's tender six-line elegy for *Claudy Phillips*, *Musicians*, *Who Died Very Poor*, and even the anonymous 6th-century Irish exhortation of one *Adze-Head*.

And a last note on the order: not chronological, not alphabetical, but associative, by mood or theme. How nothing short of thrilling it is to go from Ginsberg to Piers Plowman to Frank O'Hara to Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*? And yet, as Pound exclaimed: "it all coheres!"



Ted Hughes: branching out



Seamus Heaney: at his peak

Even Proust couldn't save him

Alain de Botton

LOVE IN A BLUE TIME
By Hanif Kureishi
Faber, £8.99
ISBN 0 571 17730 5

WHAT if I never succeed in being happy? It's a question that haunts many of the characters in Hanif Kureishi's collection of ten stories, *Love in a Blue Time*. Its protagonists are intelligent, highly-sexed, creative men, who realise — in a variety of painful ways — that their lives may never be as fulfilled as they had once hoped.

These are quiet realisations. There is little drama in these stories, rather a melancholy, elegiac tone, which masterfully captures a feeling of disappointment, the sort which found its perfect expression in Chekhov's stories. Kureishi has clearly read his Chekhov (he acknowledges the inspiration of *The Duel* on one of his stories), and his characters are up against some modern equivalents of Chekhovian dilemmas.

His characters are of the self-improving sort. In one story, a man has decided to read all the classics of world literature, in an attempt to become a wiser, better person. He lies in bed with *The Brothers Karamazov*, underlining the pas-

sages he likes, trying to remember them by heart. But these are doomed efforts, for his problems are too deep, too much has already gone wrong, (a bad marriage, a wrecked career) for the classics to save him now. So Kureishi goes on to tell us: "When he considered his ambitions, which he no longer mentioned to anyone — to travel overland to Burma while reading Proust... he felt a surge of shame as if it was immature and obscene to harbour such hopes; and as if, in some ways, it was already too late."

Many of Kureishi's characters are frustrated artists; they work in creative fields, but are lacking the necessary discipline or courage to undertake serious work. One filmmaker worships Fellini and Re-

noir, but cannot escape from making pop promotional videos. Professional frustrations are compounded by emotional ones. There isn't a happy marriage to be found here: women are typically portrayed as uncomprehending killjoys producing babies and at odds with their husbands' insatiable sexual and narcotic wishes.

THERE are a few moments when Kureishi's otherwise clear intelligent prose gives way to cliché. In one story, Kureishi cannot resist a journalistic mention of "the Eighties", surely one of the most over-used images in recent British fiction ("He had loved that time. The manic entrepreneurialism, prancing individualism, self-indulgence and cynicism..."). But this cannot spoil what is ultimately a highly enjoyable and elegant collection.

Alain de Botton's *How Proust Can Change Your Life* is published this month by Picador.

THE TIMES BOOKSHOP

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Taken for a ride on Ellington's terms

Gerald Kaufman

LUSH LIFE
A Biography of
Billy Strayhorn
By David Hadju
Granta, £16.99
ISBN 1 86207 015 6

One of the most memorable tunes ever written derived from travel directions. A young fellow from Pittsburgh, en route to join his mentor in Harlem, was told the most convenient means of getting there: *Take the "A" Train*. This signature tune became Duke Ellington's greatest success. Yet only the cognoscenti are aware that it was written for him by a diminutive black man named Billy Strayhorn.

In this splendidly researched, beautifully written and deeply moving biography, the American journalist David Hadju describes why Strayhorn put up with relative anonymity when he had the supreme talent — a "tortured genius". Diahann Carroll called him — to have become a major musical figure in his own right.

Although Billy Strayhorn was so adept at the classics that he read Stravinsky scores

for pleasure in the way that others read thrillers, an acquaintance said that, in Strayhorn's early years of promise, "the very idea of a black concert pianist was considered unthinkable."

His skills as a composer, arranger and performer of jazz music were prevented from winning the reputation they rightly deserved because Duke Ellington sucked that reputation out of him like a leech sucking blood. Ellington undoubtedly helped Stray-



Strayhorn: Duke Ellington said the composer was his "favourite human being"

horn, giving him money, a place to live, a career of a kind, and genuine personal affection. Yet all these benisons were conferred on Duke Ellington's own terms: that

Strayhorn deploy his gifts solely in the Duke's service. When Frank Sinatra tried to get Strayhorn to work for him, Ellington, said a colleague, "blew his L... top," insisting,

"I won't allow it." When Billy Strayhorn tried to break away into an independent partnership with a fellow jazz pianist, Luther Henderson, Duke Ellington sabotaged the venture.

Yet Ellington provided a benefit in return: cover. A colleague is quoted by Hadju as explaining: "For those of us who were both black and homosexual at that time, acceptance was of paramount importance... Duke Ellington afforded Billy that acceptance."

I was not only Strayhorn's gay intimate who loved him, Lena Horne, whose unique persona he helped to develop, described him as "my other self", and said, "I wanted to marry him so badly. He was just everything that I wanted in a man, except he wasn't interested in me sexually."

Strayhorn's frustrations led to heavy drinking. The drink led to cancer, news of which upset Ellington. A theatrical producer reminisces that when "news of Billy's illness came, [Ellington] said he was very upset... And on top of that, he lost a pair of gold cufflinks." Poor Ellington: bad news about two items of property in one evening.

When Strayhorn died in 1967 aged 51, Ellington mourned the death of "my favourite human being". Yet this biography shows that Billy Strayhorn's decision to attach himself to Ellington led to a life that was ultimately unfulfilled.

If he had not made that trip to Harlem, Strayhorn probably would never have written *Take the "A" Train*; but what else might he have composed that we shall never hear?

THE TIMES CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO

■ Stronger economy ■ More people in work ■ Doubling living standards ■ Pioneering tax reforms

Why we need a Tory Government

FOREWORD

The Conservative administrations elected since 1979 are among the most successful in British peacetime history. A country once the sick man of Europe, has become its most successful economy. A country once brought to its knees by over mighty powerful trade unions, now has industrial peace. Abroad, the Cold War has been won; at home, the rule of law has been restored. The enterprising virtues of the British people have been liberated from the dead hand of the state. There can be no doubt that we have created a better Britain. Why, then, do we still need a Conservative Government? Because resting on what we have achieved is not enough. To stand still is to fall back. Our goal must be for Britain to be the best place in the world to live.

We live in a tougher, more uncertain world. A fast-moving global free market is emerging. New economic powers are rising in the East. Family life and social attitudes are changing. Europe is adjusting to the end of communism. The European social model is failing. The nation state is under threat. We must respond to these challenges.

We have turned around our economic fortunes. We have fewer people out of work and more in work than any other major European country. But that prosperity cannot be taken for granted. We have to compete to win. That means a constant fight to keep tight control over public spending and enable Britain to remain the lowest taxed major economy in Europe. It means a continuing fight to keep burdens off business, maintaining our open-out of the European Social Chapter. If we relax for one moment, our hard won success will slip away again.

We have strengthened choice and personal ownership for families, and rolled back the state from areas where it was interfering unnecessarily in our lives. But we now have the opportunity to achieve a massive expansion in wealth and ownership so that more families can enjoy the self-respect and independence that comes with being self-sufficient from the state. Our far-reaching proposals for personal pension funds are central to achieving this - so too are our plans to increase support for the family in our tax system. Our aim is to spread opportunity for all to succeed, wherever they are and wherever they come from, provided they are prepared to work hard. To turn the "have nots" into the "haves". To support the family in providing security and stability.

We have modernised and reformed many of the areas where the state still has a vital role. But we now have to build on these reforms to deliver even better services. We must continue providing the resources to invest in our modernised health service. We can now provide parents with a hard-edged guarantee of standards in schools. We need also to widen choice in areas where state bureaucracy has been a hindrance.

We have pioneered new ways of building partnerships that engage the private sector in areas previously dependent on the public purse. We now need to capture private sector investment on a massive scale to regenerate our cities, transform our crumbling local authority housing estates and modernise other public assets.

The only way to secure this future of opportunity is to stick with the Conservative programme of continuing reform. Now would be the worst possible moment to abandon the pathway to prosperity on which we are set. We must keep up the momentum.

At the same time we must maintain the security that a stable nation provides in an uncertain, fast changing world. We must protect our constitution and unity as a nation from those who threaten it with unnecessary and dangerous change. And we must stand up for our interests in shaping a free-market Europe of sovereign nation states.

There is, of course, an alternative on offer: to load costs on business while calling it "stakeholding"; to increase the role of the state, while calling it "the community"; to succumb to a centralised Europe while calling it "not being isolated"; to break up our country while calling it "devolution".

To risk this alternative would be a disaster for our country. We have come a very long way. We must be sure that we do not throw away what we have gained, or lose the opportunities we have earned.

This Manifesto is the Conservative

JOHN MAJOR



John Major setting out the Conservative vision for Britain at the manifesto launch yesterday

ENTERPRISE CENTRE OF EUROPE

OUR RECORD

■ The UK is on course to grow faster than both France and Germany for the sixth successive year in 1996 - a post-war record.

■ Inflation has now been below 4% for well over 4 years, the longest period of low inflation for over half a century.

■ Mortgage rates are at their lowest levels for 30 years.

■ Unemployment has fallen to its lowest level for 6 years. We now have a lower unemployment rate than any other major European economy. Youth unemployment in Britain has fallen to less than 15% whereas in France it has risen to 22% and in Italy to 35%.

■ A higher proportion of our people are in work than in any other major European economy - 68% against a Continental average of 57%.

■ The UK is the favourite location for inward investment into Europe, attracting around one third of inward investment into the European Union.

■ We have the lowest tax burden of any major European economy, with the government taking almost 8% less of national income than the European average.

■ Public borrowing has averaged 4.4% of GDP since 1979 compared with 4.8% (and a peak of 9.5%) under the last Labour Government. Our level of public debt is now one of the lowest in the European Union - whereas it was one of the highest in 1979.

■ In 1994 the UK lost 300,000 working days through strikes, the lowest figure ever recorded. In 1979 the figure was 25,500,000; nearly 100 times that figure.

■ Britain ranks fifth in the world in international trade, and exports more per head than America or Japan. Exports account for 28% of GDP as against 9% for Japan, 11% for USA and 24% for Germany and France. Britain's current account is broadly in balance, reflecting our increased competitiveness and improved trading.

■ The free market is winning the battle of ideas the world over. From Russia to Vietnam, from China to Romania, people are realising that the socialist model has failed. This is not just an economic triumph. It is a triumph for human freedom. Britain helped to secure it. We should take pride in it.

■ The spread of the free market heralds a new age of global competition. That means new markets for British goods and services, but new competitors for British companies as well.

■ If we try to protect ourselves from these challenges with more regulations, public subsidies and a cosy dependence on government then Britain will fail. But by embracing these new opportunities by pushing forward the economic revolution we began in 1979, then we will enter the next millennium with boundless prospects for growth and prosperity.

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That choice - between stagnation and dynamism - is the choice which faces Britain at this election. It is a stark choice between the British way - of trusting the people and unleashing enterprise - and the failing socialist model.

Labour Party wants to impose on us here under the guise of "stakeholding".

Hard economic evidence shows how great is the divide between these two strategies. Britain is now in its fifth year of growing faster than France or Germany. Unemployment in Britain has fallen to less than two million, while it rises across Europe. Britain attracts nearly 10% of all the American and Japanese investment in Europe.

Our aim now is to safeguard these achievements and build on them, so Britain becomes the unrivalled Enterprise Centre of Europe.

A LOW TAX ECONOMY

For enterprise to flourish, the state must get out of the way of the wealth creators. We are the only party that can cut taxes because we are the only party which is serious about controlling public spending. The choice between the two social philosophies is clear. In the years before 1979, public spending in Britain kept pace with the average for Europe as a whole. Since then, it has continued rising on the Continent, while we have restrained public spending here. Now, public spending takes about 40% of our national income as against an average of 50% on the Continent. We have broken free from a trend to which the rest of Europe is still trapped.

Conservative government will keep public spending under tight control and ensure that it grows by less than the economy as a whole over the economic cycle. At the same time we will continue to spend more on the services which matter most to people - hospitals, schools and the police.

Over the next parliament, we will achieve our goal for the government to spend less than 40% of our national income.

That means we can reduce the amount government borrows too, and meet our aim of moving towards a balanced budget in the medium term. Our plans show how we can virtually eliminate public borrowing by the year 2000.

Thanks to our success in controlling public spending, Britain is now Europe's low tax economy. This is one of the reasons why we are becoming the Enterprise Centre of Europe.

Our aim is to ensure Britain keeps the lowest tax burden of any major European economy.

In the election manifesto of 1992, we promised that "We will make further progress towards a basic income tax rate of 20%". Since then, we have cut the basic rate of income tax from 25p to 23p, and extended the 20p band so that over a quarter of all taxpayers now only pay income tax at the 20p rate. Achieving our public expenditure goals will mean we can sustain permanently low tax levels.

Over the next parliament, our aim will be to achieve our target of a 20p basic rate of income tax, while maintaining a maximum tax rate of no more than 40p.

STABLE PRICES

Inflation has to be kept firmly under control for an economy to thrive. Britain

is now enjoying the longest period of stable prices for almost fifty years. We are on target to reach our goal of 2% inflation this year.

Low inflation has delivered lower interest rates whilst preserving the value of people's savings. Homeowners are now enjoying mortgage rates at the lowest levels for 30 years.

It has taken tough decisions to break free from our reputation as a high inflation economy. No Conservative government will jeopardise this achievement. During the next parliament, we will maintain an inflation target of 2% or less.

RISE IN LIVING STANDARDS

The only secure base for rising living standards is a strongly growing economy, low levels of public spending and taxation, and stable prices. That is exactly what Britain is achieving. People are reaping the rewards of their hard work as their take home pay increases.

Between 1974 and 1979, the take home pay for a family on average earnings rose, in real terms, by just £1 a week. In today's prices, since 1979 it has increased by £100 a week and this year alone it will increase by £7 a week.

The goal which we set ourselves in 1995 is to double living standards over 25 years.

We are on course to achieve our goal.

2 JOBS AND BUSINESS

Our priority is to create jobs. This is not just an economic priority, but also a social and moral one. Jobs and enterprise are the best ways of tackling poverty and deprivation.

Britain is succeeding. 900,000 jobs have been created over the past 4 years. By contrast the European social model is stifling job creation on the continent by imposing regulations and burdens on business. In the United Kingdom unemployment is much lower than in the rest of Europe and falling whereas in Germany, France, and Italy it has risen to its highest level for a generation. This is no accident. It is because we have pursued very different policies from those on the Continent.

Curbing the power of trade unions, opening up markets and cutting red tape, have given us a low strike, low cost economy; and as a result we are the number one location for foreign investment in Europe.

Never have such policies been so important. For the first time this century we face a world full of capitalist competition. The only way Britain will be able to compete and win in world markets is by sticking to the Conservative policies that are delivering success. We can earn prosperity as one of the world's most successful global trading nations. We should not risk this progress by adopting the very policies that have made the continent uncompetitive and have increased unemployment in Europe by 4.5 million over the past 5 years.

SMALL BUSINESSES - BRITAIN'S RISK-TAKERS

Governments do not create jobs. Businesses do. The source of tomorrow's jobs will be small businesses, the seedcorn of Britain's prosperity. Over the last 15 years, small businesses have created over 2 million jobs. By the year 2000, over half the workforce should be

working in companies which employ fewer than 50 people. Back in 1979 only a third of the workforce did.

Entrepreneurs often risk everything when they set up their own business. We have already helped them: raising the VAT threshold, cutting employer's national insurance contributions, simplifying audit requirements and much more besides. Now we intend to go further, tackling the remaining problems they face.

High taxes and rates deter enterprise. Our low tax structure has been crucial to our industrial revival. We already have the lowest corporation tax of any major industrialised country. As we want small businesses to flourish, we will go even further.

We will cut the small companies rate of corporation tax in line with personal taxation as we move towards a 20p basic rate.

Investment and enterprise are deterred if the tax man takes too much of the capital that is built up by a successful business. Capital is ever more mobile. Firms around the world to places where the tax on it is low. Britain must be one of those places.

We will continue to reduce the burden of capital gains tax and inheritance tax as it is prudent to do so.

One of the heaviest burdens small businesses face is business rates. At the moment, this bears more heavily upon small businesses than large ones.

In the next parliament, we will reform business rates to reduce the cost that falls upon small businesses.

No businessman has time to fill out reams of forms. We will continue to simplify the administration of NICs and PAYE for small firms, allowing them to concentrate on satisfying customers not bureaucrats. We are also tackling a problem that hits small businesses particularly hard - the late payment of bills. On top of our programme to ensure government departments and local authorities pay on time we have legislated to require companies to publish their payment policy and to report their record on how quickly they pay their bills to small businesses.

We have already abolished over a thousand regulations. New regulations must only be introduced if it is clear that their benefits exceed their costs and they do not place an undue burden on a small firm.

We will introduce "sunset" requirements into new regulations whenever it is suitable so that they are automatically reviewed or dropped after a specific period.

Many businesses suffer regulatory burdens imposed by local government and quangos.

We will therefore insist that the whole of the public sector adopts the same stringent rules that we require of central government in justifying the benefits of new regulations against their costs.

REDUCING THE BURDEN ON COMPANIES

Jobs depend on British firms winning orders: the difference between success or failure can be water thin. Any extra burden on business will destroy jobs.

Britain is enjoying more jobs and record investment, thanks to the competitive edge we have over other European countries. We are a low cost economy. But that does not mean we are a low pay economy. Our competitive advantage

comes from the lower costs facing our businesses. It can be measured by the social costs an employer has to pay on top of every £100 of wages: in Germany it is £31, in France £41, but in Britain, it is only £15.

Many countries in Europe have tried to cooosn themselves from global competition behind layers of red tape and regulation - such as the Social Chapter and a national minimum wage. This provides a false sense of security, playing a cruel trick on working people. It also excludes the unemployed from work. As companies in the rest of Europe have grown more uncompetitive, employers have found it too expensive to employ new workers. Investment has gone elsewhere, and the dole queues have lengthened. The European social model is not social and not a model for us to follow. But if Britain signed up to the Social Chapter it would be to impose that model on us - destroying British jobs.

No Conservative government will sign up to the Social Chapter or introduce a national minimum wage. We will insist at the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam that our opt out is honoured and that Britain is exempted from the Working Time Directive if old agreements are broken. We do not see how new ones can be made. We will resist the imposition of other social burdens on the work place through a new European employment charter.

WELFARE INTO WORK

Although governments cannot create jobs, they can help train and find work. We now have in place a battery of schemes working with Training and Enterprise Councils to provide targeted help and training, including remedial education in literacy and numeracy. We are also developing new incentives, alongside Family Credit, to help people move off benefit into work.

We will always help those in genuine need: in return, the unemployed have a responsibility to look for work and accept a reasonable offer. That belief underpins our new Jobseekers Allowance which ensures that no-one can refuse reasonable work opportunities and remain on benefit.

As unemployment falls, we want to focus on those who have been unemployed for some time. At present, Project Work is helping 100,000 people who have been unemployed for more than 2 years in cities around Britain. They are first given help in finding a job - which includes giving employers incentives to take them on.

Those who do not find jobs are then required to work for a specific period on a community project. This helps them regain work habits and ensures they are available for work.

As Project Work succeeds and demonstrates that its costs can be met by the savings from getting people into work, we will extend the programme to cover the long term unemployed nationwide.

We will also develop an innovative "Britain Works" scheme which uses the experience and ingenuity of private and voluntary sectors to get people off welfare into work.

Britain has one of the most mobile economies in Europe. People move on and up, into better paid jobs more easily than on the Continent.

THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

Britain is at the forefront of creating tomorrow's information society. Already we have exposed domestic telecommunications to competition and stimulated investment in cable and satellite entertainment systems. And by opening up international telecommunications we will continue to encourage companies worldwide to base their global operations here. We will make sure that the digital revolution comes to Britain first.

We are launching an ambitious programme with industry to spread "IT for All", giving even adults the opportunity to try out and learn about new IT services. We will work with industry to ensure that all schools are connected to the information superhighway.

We will use the Millennium Lottery Fund to transform the computer facilities and information links available in schools, libraries, museums, voluntary organisations and other public places after the turn of the century. This will give the public much wider access to information services in the years ahead. We will also take advantage of information technology to transform the way government provides services to the public.

We will keep Britain in the vanguard of new mobile service development - including mobile telephone and information services - by introducing a pricing system for the radio spectrum to achieve more efficient allocation of radio frequencies.

We will maintain a strong, free and competitive broadcasting and press environment at both national and local level, while continuing to be vigilant in monitoring whether action is needed to curb breaches of standards, and prevent unacceptable press intrusion.

SCIENCE

British science enjoys a worldwide reputation for excellence and cost-effectiveness, which makes Britain an attractive base for many domestic and overseas companies. We will continue to invest in science and target funds at basic research, which would not otherwise be funded by industry. At the same time we will provide an enterprising environment which encourages firms to invest with confidence in applied science.

2020 VISION

There is no part of the globe which has not been reached by British enterprise and British culture. We have always looked beyond these shores, beyond this Continent. Our language, our heritage of international trading links, our foreign investments - second only to America's - are historic strengths which mean we are ideally placed to seize the opportunities of the global economy.

Thanks to Conservative policies of liberalisation and privatisation we are strong in industries of the future such as telecommunications, financial services, and information technology. These are the industries that will benefit from opening up trade around the world. We will push for the opening of the European Single Market and continue to pursue the objective of transatlantic free trade against the background of world trade liberalisation. Our aim is nothing less than tariff free trade across the globe by the year 2020.

Free competition is important for free markets. Companies should not make agreements that restrict competition and hence result in poor value for consumers. We have set out proposals to give companies greater protection against price fixing, dumping, and other restrictive practices by larger companies.

We will introduce a Competition Bill to take forward these proposals in the first session of the next parliament.

We are committed to pushing forward our competitiveness agenda which is making Britain the Enterprise Centre of Europe.

OPPORTUNITY AND OWNERSHIP

OUR RECORD

■ The right to buy has allowed 1.5 million council tenants to homeowners. There are over 4 million more homeowners today than in 1979.

■ The Government has spent £6 billion through housing associations to provide homes for rent. Between 1992 and 1995 housing associations provided 178,000 new lettings - 25,000 more than promised in the 1992 Manifesto.

■ There are now around 10 million private shareholders, up from about 3 million at the time of the last Labour government. 2.5 million people now have tax free savings in PEP accounts, and 4.5 million in TESSAs.

■ Since 1979, the success of private pension provision has raised the average income of pensioners by 60% more than inflation. Almost 90% of recently retired pensioners now have incomes over and above state benefits.

■ Savings in private pension funds have increased to £650 billion - more than 4 times the level in 1979. Their value is greater than the pension funds in all other EU countries added together.

■ Over the period 1979 to 1995, education spending per pupil rose from £15 to £18.90 - an increase in real terms of 48%. Real spending on books and equipment per pupil rose 56%. Teachers' real pay rose 57% from £270 per week in 1979 to £420 in 1995.

■ In 1979, 40% of three and four year olds attended nursery school in 1995 the figure was 59%. Our nursery vouchers now give this opportunity to every child.

■ The proportion of sixteen year olds staying on in full-time education rose from 4 out of 10 in 1979 to 7 out of 10 in 1995.

■ Almost 1 in 3 young people now go to university, compared with 1 in 8 in 1979.

■ The proportion of adults with no academic qualifications has halved since 1979 and the proportion of adults with a degree or equivalent has more than doubled from 5% to 12%.

3 CHOICE AND SECURITY FOR FAMILIES

The family is the most important institution in our lives. It offers security and stability in a fast-changing world. But the family is undermined if governments take decisions which families ought to take for themselves. Self-reliance underpins freedom and choice.

Families are stronger if they have the money to look after themselves: that is why we are shifting power and wealth back to working families and away from the state. We have already achieved much - the average family's disposable income has gone up by 40% since 1979. But we want to go further. The new Conservative government intends to reform the tax system so that it gives substantially more help to families.

We also want to encourage people to save so they have the security and self-respect that comes from being able to rely on their own resources rather than immediately turning to the state. We have already made much progress here too with widening ownership of homes, pensions, and the new PEPs and TESSAs. We now propose further radical measures for more saving for retirement.

FAMILIES AND TAX

We believe families should be left with as much of their own money as possible. They know better than politicians how to spend it. We have already cut the basic rate of income tax from 33p to 23p, and our aim is to get it down to 20p, benefiting 18 million taxpayers. We intend to do even more to help families in particular.

At the moment, if one spouse does not take paid work in order to look after children or dependent relatives, they not only give up earnings but may also be unable to benefit from their personal tax allowance. Yet this is the time at which their income is often most stretched.

We believe our tax system should recognise and support the crucial role of families in their caring responsibilities. We will give them that support.

We will give priority to future reductions in personal taxation that help families looking after dependent children or relatives by allowing one partner's unused personal allowance to be transferred to a working spouse where they have these responsibilities.

This will provide a targeted reduction in the tax bill to those families who need it most. Around 2 million one taxpayer couples with dependent children, or looking after elderly relatives and others needing care, would gain up to £17.50 a week - around £900 a year.

FAMILY SAVINGS

In the old days people just depended on the weekly pay packet or money from the state. But no job can be secure and the state cannot provide for every emergency. It is ownership which brings true security and genuine independence from the state. This is why Conservatives have long dreamed of a property-owning democracy.

Now we are delivering it in practice. Home ownership is up by 4.7 million. 10 million people own a direct personal stake in our economy. 16 million are gaining shares in their building societies thanks to our deregulation of them. We intend to carry forward our vision of a people's share.

This is a significant increase in personal security. It is the Conservative vision of security through personal savings - not a socialist vision of security through the state.

We want people to enjoy Britain's success - especially by owning shares in the companies for which they work. We have already introduced a number of schemes to encourage employee share ownership. To encourage a further expansion of worker shares, our new Share Match Scheme will allow employees to be rewarded with additional free shares if they acquire a stake in their company.

Our goal is that by 2000, more than half of the employees of Britain's largest companies will own shares in those companies.

4.5 million people now benefit from tax free TESSAs and 2.5 million from PEP schemes to encourage the accumulation of long term savings. We will continue to build on this success by exploring ways in which existing tax exemptions for savings can be developed, allowing individuals to secure their futures and protect their families against unexpected contingencies.

We will continue to raise the threshold for inheritance tax as it prudent to do so. People are not just saving for themselves but for their children and grandchildren. These savings should not be penalised by the tax system.

For many people their biggest asset is their pension. Thanks to the steps we have already taken to encourage occupational and personal pensions, we now have £650 billion invested in private pensions - more than the rest of the European Union put together. We now plan to build further on this achievement.

We will make it easier for small employers to set up personal pension plans for groups of employees.

We will create more flexibility for people who save in personal pension plans to continue investing in those schemes if they subsequently move to jobs with company pension schemes.

We will also create flexibility for employees with savings in Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) schemes to take part of that pension earlier or later than their main company pension.

But we believe the time has now come to plan for another important step in improving Britain's pension provision. Britain is already much better placed than many other countries to afford state pensions in the future, but we want even more people to be able to look forward to

Continued on next page

Family support ■ Opportunities for women ■ Better primary care ■ Privatisation and competition

'We will set targets to ensure that Britain is in the top league in the world in education'

Continued from previous page

A properly funded pension that grows with the economy and is free from dependence on taxes paid by future generations. We now propose a practical way of achieving a gradual transformation of the state pension scheme.

At the start of the next parliament we will set out proposals to provide all young people entering the workforce with a personal pension fund paid for through a rebate on their national insurance contributions. At retirement they would be entitled to the full pension earned by this accumulated investment. This could give them a pension significantly higher than they would currently receive from the state. But they will be guaranteed a pension at least equal to the current basic state pension, increased in line with inflation.

This will be one of the most significant improvements in the state pension system since it was introduced. Older people currently in the workforce would be unaffected — they will continue to contribute as now and receive the normal state pension when they retire.

This policy would come into effect early in the new millennium. Gradual phasing in of the new system over 40 years will make the impact on public finances affordable. Even at its peak, the new revenue foregone will be only a fraction of the savings from the recent Pensions Act. And eventually, the new policy will produce massive public expenditure savings.

This far-sighted idea is in the best Conservative tradition. The growing wealth of the nation will provide for the next generation through private funding, underpinned by a state guarantee. British people will be able to look forward to retirement with even greater confidence. And our young people will have a pensions opportunity unrivalled in the world.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Conservatives believe that a healthy society encourages to accept responsibility for their own lives. A heavy-handed and intrusive state can do enormous damage.

Some families need help to cope with their responsibilities. For them, Social Services play a vital role. They help with children where parental care has failed. They deliver an ever wider range of services to people with learning difficulties or who are mentally ill. Our community care reforms have given them a central role ensuring that elderly people get care of the highest quality and in their own homes where possible. We need to ensure that role is properly fulfilled.

Early in the next Parliament we will introduce a Social Services Reform Bill which will set out a new framework for social services. The Bill will provide for greater openness and accountability in social services.

We will provide new guidance to ensure social workers properly reflect the values of the community — focusing their efforts on those families who most need support — minimising unnecessary interference. Social workers working with children will receive special training to cope with the often heart-rending cases they face.

We will raise standards through a new regulatory framework which will apply the same standards in both the public and private sectors. We will also remove the power of local authorities to operate care homes where this is in the best interests of the people for whom they are responsible. We believe that families who use social services should be able to exercise choice wherever practicable. We have given cash payments to disabled people to purchase the services they need directly.

We also want new ways of reinforcing individual choice where possible. We will therefore ensure no barriers stand in the way of local authorities wanting to issue their users with vouchers to buy certain services.

We will review the direct payment scheme, and provided it has been cost effective, we will extend it to other users of social services.

Above all, we want to help families to help themselves. Caring for older — or disabled — relatives is one of the most natural human instincts. We recognise the crucial — and often demanding — role carers play, and will help them more.

We will introduce a Respite Care Programme. This will enable family members with heavy responsibilities caring for a relative to take a much needed break. We will also offer more practical advice for carers who want to go back to paid work. But some cases, especially people caring for their friends or relatives can provide. Financing long term care worries many families. We will create an imaginative, fair partnership between individuals and the public sector to resolve this problem.

In the first session of the next Parliament we will implement our partnership scheme for long term care, making it easier for people to afford the cost of care in old age without giving up their lifetime savings.

Good preparation for marriage can be an important aid in meeting difficulties that often avoid family breakdown. These are matters for voluntary effort, not the state, but we will continue to support such effort. We need to make sure efforts to help struggling families do not turn into unnecessary meddling.

When the state goes too far, it is often the children who suffer. They become victims of the worst sort of political correctness.

We will introduce legislation to remove unnecessary barriers to adoption and introduce new rules to make adoption from abroad more straightforward.

We will also monitor the workings of the Children Act, and act if necessary to ensure it maintains a proper balance between the rights of children and the responsibilities of adults.

Social Services departments are now the fourth arm of the welfare state. Most people will need them at some point in their lives. We will ensure that the Conservative revolution in public services now reaches Social Services.

DISABLED PEOPLE

We have quadrupled real spending on long term sick and disabled people since 1979, to £22 billion.

We have introduced the Disability Discrimination Act. This is the first legislation of its kind anywhere in Europe and it provides positive proof of our commitment to disabled people. We will monitor it to ensure it continues to meet its objectives.

We are also providing a continuing fund to support the most severely disabled people to stay in their homes.

SECURITY IN RETIREMENT

Pensioners continue to make a positive

contribution to society in retirement. They give more of their time, in charitable work than any other age group. They lift some of the pressures on their own families. They help keep our nation's history and traditions alive.

They have paid their National Insurance contributions and taxes and rightly expect us to continue to protect the value of the basic state pension against price rises. We will do so. We will also ensure that less well off pensioners continue to get extra help on top of the basic pension.

At the same time as protecting the state pension, our encouragement of private pensions is already transforming the living standards of pensioners. The average net income of pensioners has risen by 60% since 1979. This has been achieved by our encouragement of saving for retirement.

The tax system must help pensioners who have saved. Our new lower 20p rate on income from savings directly helps 1.7 million pensioners and the special age allowances raise the point at which pensioners start to pay income tax.

A BETTER SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

People in need can rely on our continuing support. And to ensure that taxpayers are willing to go on paying for this support, we have shaped a social security system we can afford, taking a steadily declining share of our national income. We are doing this by focusing benefits on those most in need, helping people off welfare and into work, and curbing welfare fraud. These policies are underpinned by our measures to help families help themselves.

Social Security must be there to help families, pensioners and people in need. We will protect the value of Child Benefit and Family Credit which help with the cost of bringing up children. This is our Family Benefit Guarantee.

We will bring the structure of benefits for lone parents into line with that for two-parent families. We will continue to help lone parents obtain maintenance, and assist with childcare in work: both these measures help lone parents obtain work. We will pilot our 'Parent Plus' Scheme which will help lone parents who want to work, and extend it as it proves successful.

Social Security fraud must be stamped out.

We will intensify our current initiatives of inspections and checks including more home visits, crack down further on benefit abuse. We will introduce benefit cards across the country. We will establish a Benefit Fraud Inspectorate to monitor local authorities' performance. We will also improve the sharing of information between government departments to catch more fraudulent claims.

To ensure as much of the Social Security budget as possible goes into benefits, we will continue to improve the efficiency of administration, using the best mix of public and private sector operations.

HOUSING

Owning one's own home is an aim shared by millions of people. Over the last 18 years, the number of homeowners has risen by 4.7 million — including 7 million who have bought their home under the right to buy scheme. Over the next 10 years, we expect to see about one and a half million people buying their own homes — some 3,000 every week. To meet that demand, we will continue to allow local authority and housing association tenants to buy their homes or mortgage to house which they buy.

We will also carry through our draft Bill, creating the option for those buying flats to choose a new form of commonhold ownership.

For those who wish to rent their home, we are encouraging a thriving private rental market, building on the success of housing associations and protecting assured tenants.

Easier renting will help us meet our target of reducing the proportion of empty homes below 3%. The number of empty homes has fallen in each of the last 3 years. But nothing is more frustrating for people who need social housing than the sight of a suitable property owned by the public sector lying boarded up and empty. We will stop that.

Public landlords will have to sell houses which are available for occupation yet have been left empty without a good reason for more than 12 months.

Housing associations and housing companies will continue to receive help in building new homes, and we will encourage more public — private partnerships. Together, these policies will help meet the demand for new public housing and make sure that there are decent homes for those in need.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Women are succeeding in Britain. More than any other age group, they are almost any other European country. Women have a better education, more financial independence and more opportunities than at any other time in Britain's history.

This success reflects the efforts and determination of many women. Government policy has been simpler — to level the playing field, whether in education, where girls are now doing better than boys, or in the workplace, where opportunities for women are the best in Europe.

But we know our job is not yet done. Some women still face barriers to doing well. Some still do not have the financial security they deserve. And crime, and the fear of crime, often affect women more than men.

We will ensure women have equal opportunities in education and the workplace. This can best be achieved by keeping our economy buoyant and our labour markets flexible. And our proposals to bring crime rates down further will help women especially.

But many women — and some men — face a particular problem: how to juggle job and family. For those who need to work, we will seek further ways to minimise the barriers to affordable, high quality childcare. For those who wish to be full-time parents, our proposals to enable them to transfer their unused personal allowance to their spouse will be worth up to an extra £17.50 a week.

We also want to give women more financial independence, particularly when they retire. We propose, as explained in the manifesto, to improve flexibility in saving for retirement and to allow couples to split pensions on divorce.

LOOKING OUTWARDS

The spread of share ownership, the transformation of pension provision, and the sale of council houses are revolutionising our nation. Personal property and property ownership are not selfish or inward-looking.

People who are secure at home can

look out for others in their community. Over two thirds of adults engage in some form of voluntary activity. By the end of 1997 all young people aged between 15 and 25 who want to volunteer will be helped to find an opportunity to do so.

We will encourage voluntary work by others living on benefits while continuing to insist that those who are capable of work should actively seek employment. We will also develop accreditation for voluntary work to encourage employers to see it as preparation for a paid job.

We will make it easier for those receiving incapacity benefit to volunteer by removing the 16 hour weekly limit on their voluntary work.

It is wrong to imagine that compassion must be nationalised and that we can only help our fellow man through state action.

EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY

All children dream of what they might do when they grow up. It is to help them turn those dreams into reality whatever their background may be. It is an exciting world, full of new opportunities for acquiring skills. It should be open to every child. Their future — and Britain's prosperity — depends on the quality of their education.

OUR EDUCATION GUARANTEE

A good education is the birthright of every child. Literacy is the building block of all future learning. English is the global language of commerce and much more, a thing of beauty. Without basic science and mathematics, the modern world is incomprehensible. Every child therefore must be taught to read, write and add up from an early age.

Years of mismanagement, progressive education in the 1960s denied these precious skills to too many children. We have worked ceaselessly since 1979 to put that right. Our decision to test children and publish the results has allowed standards to be measured and exposed. We have reformed the curriculum, toughened inspections, and given more information and power to parents. Our many excellent teachers now know what is expected of them, and already standards in schools are rising. But they are still not good enough. We must do more.

Building on what we have done, we can now offer a new pledge to parents — a guarantee of education standards. First, we will set national targets for school performance that reflect our objective of ensuring that Britain is in the top league of international standards across the whole spectrum of education.

Second, we will require every school to plan how to improve its performance, and to set targets which relate to similar schools and national standards.

Third, we will give all parents full information on the performance of their child's school.

Fourth, to underwrite our pledge, we will ensure action is taken to bring any under-performing school up to the mark.

We will meet this pledge by using the full set of levers for improved standards that we have put in place.

We are revising and simplifying the National Curriculum in primary schools to emphasise high standards in the basic skills.

Parents and teachers must have an overview of not just how much a child has learnt while at school, but how the school performs against others. Poor schooling must not be protected by a veil of secrecy. Parent power is a vital force for higher standards.

Regular tests and exams are essential if teachers are to discover how much their pupils have learnt and parents are to know how much progress their children are making against national standards. That is why children are already being tested at 7, 11 and 14. We will publish all school test results, including the results of tests at 7 and 14 year olds.

We propose also to assess every child at five. This will give teachers and parents a benchmark against which they can measure future progress. To give a better measure of pupils' performance, marks out of 100 will be made available to parents as well as the broad-brush levels.

We will also introduce a new test for 14 year old children that covers the whole National Curriculum — assessing progress before they choose subjects for GCSE.

Tests and exams need to be rigorous and demanding. We will insist that they establish children's command of spelling, punctuation, and grammar in English tests. Children will sit arithmetic tests without calculators. We will not allow such extensive use of open books in tests and in GCSE exams. We will establish an English Language GCSE. We will continue to uphold the gold standard of A levels, and ensure that the great classics of our literature are studied at A level. At the same time students should have the chance to study more subjects in the sixth form.

Rigorous tests show how individual children and schools are performing and expose schools that are not giving children the education they deserve. To underwrite our guarantee, we will then make action to improve standards. We cannot tolerate schools that fail their pupils. By this summer every secondary school in the country will have been inspected by independent inspectors, and by summer 1998, every primary school will have been inspected as well. We have the power to take over failing schools directly and close them if necessary. We will now go further, and

require every school to set and publish regular targets for improving their academic results. Independent inspectors will monitor the results of weaker schools and their plans for improvement at regular intervals.

Sometimes, though, schools are failing because the local education authority which runs them is failing. The authorities with the worst GCSE results and the worst results at Key Stage 2 (11-year-olds) are run by Labour. Those children need our help.

We will allow for an independent inspection of education authorities and intervene directly to raise standards where education authorities are letting children down.

Failing authorities will be required to set out their plans to raise standards, and work with education teams — directed by independent inspectors — to implement those plans.

The vast majority of teachers do an outstanding job. They have played a key part in implementing the reforms that we have introduced. A few though, fail their pupils.

We will establish a more rigorous and effective system of appraising teachers, which reflects how well their pupils perform in tests and ensure that this identifies which teachers need more help and, where necessary, which teachers need to be replaced.

Many feel that the professional standing of teachers would be strengthened by the creation of a single body which would set standards, on a par with the global language of commerce and much more, a thing of beauty. Without basic science and mathematics, the modern world is incomprehensible. Every child therefore must be taught to read, write and add up from an early age.

The school should be a place of stability and stimulation for children, especially if they come from a hostile or turbulent environment. To improve standards in future our new teacher training curriculum will stress traditional teaching methods — including whole class teaching and learning to read by the sounds of letters. We will also encourage more teachers to enter the profession through practical training schemes based on classroom experience, such as the Graduate Teacher Scheme. A child is likely to learn more in a well-ordered school. Teachers must have the powers they need to maintain discipline. We will give teachers greater power to set detentions to exclude disruptive pupils and to use reasonable physical restraint where necessary.

Competitive markets demand high skills. If Britain is to win, we need to encourage learning and give people the opportunity to go where their interests and inquiring minds take them.

HEALTH AND PUBLIC SERVICES

OUR RECORD

■ Government spending has concentrated on priorities, not wasteful bureaucracy and overmanning. Despite overall spending plans, real spending on the National Health Service has risen nearly 75 per cent since 1979, on schools by 50 per cent and on the police by more than 100 per cent.

■ The health service is treating over one million more patients each year than before our reforms.

■ The number of people waiting over 12 months for hospital treatment has fallen from over 200,000 in 1990 to 22,000 last year. The average wait has fallen from nearly nine months to four months.

■ The Government has set up the Citizen's Charter to provide first-class public services for all citizens. Nearly 650 organisations have received a Charter Mark for meeting demanding standards of performance, customer satisfaction and value for money.

■ There are now 55,000 more nurses and midwives and 22,500 more doctors and dentists than in 1979. For every senior NHS manager, 77 people are providing direct patient care.

■ Nurses average earnings have grown 70 per cent in real terms from £68 a week in 1979 to £325 in 1995. Doctor's pay has risen by a third. Under Labour both were cut.

■ Infant mortality has fallen from 13.2 to 6.2 per thousand over the last 18 years.

■ Deaths through road accidents are now the lowest since records began in 1926. Since 1979 road deaths have fallen by 43 per cent and serious casualties have fallen by 43 per cent despite an 85 per cent increase in motor traffic. The Government has invested record amounts on transport — more than £26 billion since 1979 in investment on motorways and trunk roads; £16 billion on railways; and over £8 billion on London Transport.

■ Privatisation is delivering better services at lower costs. BT's main prices are down by more than 40 per cent in real terms. Average household bills for gas and electricity have also fallen in real terms since 1990.

5 SECURITY IN HEALTH

We have been the guardians of the NHS for most of its life, improving its services and securing its funding. The benefits can be seen in our rising standards of health. 1993 was the first year in this century in which no child in this country died of measles. Between 1979 and 1995 life expectancy at birth in England has increased from 70.4 years to 74.3 years for men and from 70.4 years to 79.6 years for women. We are getting

healthier and we are better looked after when we are sick.

GROWING RESOURCES FOR A MODERN HEALTH SERVICE

This progress has been possible because we have increased spending since 1979 by 70 per cent more than inflation, to nearly £33 billion. And we are not stopping there. The next Conservative government will honour a unique guarantee to the NHS. We will continue, year by year, to increase the real resources committed to the NHS, so NHS spending will continue to share in a growing economy.

Under Labour there have been years when resources for the NHS actually shrank — something that would be inconceivable with the Conservatives. Money is only really a means to an end: better patient care. Now we are treating 9.2 million hospital inpatients and day cases as against 6.9 million in 1992 and 5.1 million in 1979.

INVESTING IN SKILLED STAFF

We are committed to expanding the medical staff of the NHS. We shall therefore increase medical school intakes to 5,000 a year by the year 2000 and are ahead of schedule in reaching that target.

Good nursing is the bedrock of the NHS. In particular we will increase the number of nurses with specialist qualifications in paediatric intensive care, emergency care, and cancer care. The number of nurses qualifying each year will increase in each of the next five years as we continue to expand project 2000 training.

HIGHER STANDARDS OF SERVICE

We are tackling the problem of long waiting times which can cause so much worry, distress, and pain. We have set tough targets under the Patients Charter and as a result average waiting times for inpatient hospital treatments have fallen from more than six months five years ago to four months last year.

Patients no longer put up with being kept in ignorance. They want to know more. We will publish more information on how successfully hospitals are treating patients so that they and their GPs can make more informed choices between services in different hospitals and help stimulate better performance.

BETTER PRIMARY CARE

Our vision of the NHS is one in which hospitals and family doctors gain greater power to run their own affairs. That is why we will continue to encourage the spread of fundholding among GPs. Labour by contrast would destroy the new freedom that fundholding doctors enjoy by imposing a new layer of bureaucracy on top of them.

However, we do not want the benefits of better healthcare to be confined to patients of GP fundholders. Our proposals to shift more healthcare towards family doctors are open to all.

We shall implement the new Primary Care Act which will enable all family doctors to provide a broader range of patient services within their surgeries. This will include "super surgeries" and practice-based congregate hospitals that can offer faster and more local treatment. We expect to see the number of nurses working in GP practices continue to grow, as will the number of GPs. We will extend nationwide our plans to enable more nurses to prescribe a wider range of drugs for patients, recognising their contribution to primary care.

MENTAL HEALTH

The last decade has also seen major changes to the care of mentally ill people. We will continue to develop a full range of services — including 24-hour mental hospitals and secure units — that can care for them in a way which is most appropriate to them and the interests of the wider community.

We will not close any long-stay mental hospitals unless it can be shown that adequate care services exist in the community. We will strengthen co-operation between health and social services in the delivery of mental health services. Our recent Green Paper showed how this can be done. And we will monitor the progress of Health Authorities in developing proper mental health care plans.

HEALTH OF THE NATION

A modern health service is not just about treating illness. It is also about keeping people healthy. This is why we launched the Health of the Nation strategy in 1992 — the first time England has had a strategy for health. Its aim is to reduce illness and premature death by identifying common causes of ill health, like excessive smoking and obesity. Different groups in and outside the health service then work together to tackle the problems.

We are already seeing progress. Between 1990 and 1994, deaths from coronary heart disease among the over 65s, the suicide rate, and the number of teenage pregnancies fell substantially. And last year we announced that environmental targets would be added to the Health of the Nation.

Improved general health means fewer people requiring attention in hospitals and GP surgeries — and more resources to be spent on helping patients. Our Health of the Nation strategy is a vital part of our vision of creating a health service fit for the 21st century.

A MODERN HEALTH SERVICE

Healthcare is changing fast. Modern technology is constantly increasing the range of treatments which are available. Conservatives believe that the benefits of these advances should be made available to patients on the basis of their clinical need, without regard to their ability to pay.

Furthermore we also believe that the NHS must have access to sufficient resources to allow it to invest in the facilities required to deliver world class healthcare. Since 1979 capital investment in the NHS has proceeded at an unprecedented rate. In the future we believe these requirements will be best met in a partnership with the private sector which allows the private sector to improve the facilities in which NHS healthcare is delivered. We will promote the Private Finance Initiative which will unleash a new flow of investment funds into the modernisation of the NHS.

The NHS is a British success story. It commands universal support in Britain. It is widely admired all over the world. Conservatives are proud of the part we playing in improving it still further.

6 BETTER PUBLIC SERVICES

The public sector is being transformed the world over. Britain is in the vanguard. Everyone else wants to learn from our vision of a smaller state doing

fewer things and doing them better. Old-style public services were centrally planned with little information or choice for the public who used the services. Our reforms have made these services more responsive to the public by breaking up cumbersome bureaucratic structures and shifting power to small responsive local institutions and the people who work in them. The schools, hospitals and police have all been transformed in this way. We support the people who do, not the people who plan.

In order to get better standards we are liberating services from centralised control over capital. We will push forward our Private Finance Initiative to break down these old barriers.

We have made public services genuinely accountable, with useful information and real choices for the people who use them. We set tough standards and they will get tougher. The Citizen's Charter has raised standards of customer service. When these high standards are reached we recognise and reward excellence through our Charter Mark initiative. There are now 647 Chartermarks and we will aim for more than 2,000 Chartermarks by the year 2000. We will require all government agencies to apply for Chartermarks.

The days of the bureaucratic paperchase are behind us. The future is "government direct". We will harness the latest information technology to place the public sector directly at the service of the citizen. People will be able to use simple computer terminals to enter information directly. This will transform time-consuming transactions like completing a tax return or registering a new business.

PRIVATISATION AND COMPETITION

In 20 years, privatisation has gone from the dream of a few Conservative visionaries to the big idea which is transforming decaying public sector industries in almost every country in the world. Britain has led the way with this new industrial revolution: we can be proud of what we have achieved.

In 1979 the Government inherited a range of businesses which had come into the public sector for different reasons. Many were known for their poor standards of service, and most were making large losses.

Over the past 18 years that situation has changed substantially. Privatisation has enhanced productivity, improved customer services, raised safety and environmental standards and substantially reduced prices. Telephone, gas and electricity bills to the customer have fallen as never before. Telephone waiting lists are unknown, and water, gas and electricity disconnections have fallen dramatically. Nearly £40 billion in private-sector funding has been committed to a major investment programme to meet higher quality water standards. We can now look forward to water prices falling over the years ahead.

Service standards have improved substantially. Before privatisation published service standards did not exist. Now industry regulators monitor legal requirements to provide quality services in a competitive environment. Refunds may be made when performance standards are not met.

Privatisation has benefited — and will continue to benefit — consumers, shareholders, employees, and taxpayers. In 1979 the then-nationalised industries required a £50-million per week subsidy from the taxpayer. In 1996 those now privatised companies paid taxes of £60 million per week.

We will ensure private ownership, competition and regulation continue to deliver lower prices and better services for consumers.

We will extend competition for domestic gas users, and introduce competition in the water industry, starting with large users.

The Post Office occupies an important part in national life. It comprises Counter Services, the Royal Mail and Parcelforce. The network of sub-post offices is vital and most are already run as private businesses. The Royal Mail provides a universal service at a standard price in every part of the United Kingdom. No one can imagine a stamp that does not bear the Queen's head. These characteristics must continue, but reforms are needed to allow the services to develop. The Royal Mail must face up to the challenges and opportunities that are arising from increasing competition and the international liberalisation of services.

We will guarantee to preserve the national identity, universal service and distinctive characteristics of the Royal Mail, while considering options including different forms of privatisation — to introduce private capital and management skills into its operations.

We will transfer Parcelforce to the private sector whilst ensuring that every post office in the land continues to provide a full parcel service at an economical price.

Privatisation works. We will therefore continue to pass government activities into private ownership where this can bring benefits to consumers and taxpayers.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

We are developing a new vision for local government.

We believe local government should take a lead in the planning and development of their communities. To achieve that, we have encouraged them to work in partnership with central government, with private enterprise, and other organisations in their community. The impact of local government is multiplied when they work in this way.

To encourage this partnership, we have developed the new approach of Challenge Funding. We set up a fund to meet a particular objective and then let competing bids for the money. Those who form effective partnerships are far more likely to win those bids. The Single Regeneration Budget Fund, for example, has stimulated many working partnerships that are bringing new life to their communities. This innovation has the potential to transform the financing of the public sector.

We will push Challenge Funding further to reward effective local government. In addition, we are encouraging higher standards and more cost-effective provision of local services. Local authorities can enable things to happen rather than necessarily running themselves. They must look after the interests of users of their services — and that is often best done by being a purchaser, not an employer.

Standards of service are rising in many local authorities. There are, however, still great disparities between the best and worst performers, as the Audit Commission shows in their thought-provoking reports. We will keep

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Improving transport ■ Safer streets ■ Speedier justice ■ Promoting culture ■ Our place in Europe

Continued from previous page

the pressure for higher standards, and improved value for money by insisting on compulsory competitive tendering.

The development of Challenge Funding and the shift in the role of local authorities from direct employers to purchasers of services will transform local authorities over the coming years. In the meantime we will, for so long as necessary, retain the power to cap local authorities to protect taxpayers.

STRIKES IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Industrial relations in this country have been transformed, so far as there is a still a problem it is concentrated in a few essential services where the public has no easy alternative and strikers are able to impose massive costs and inconvenience on all proportion to the issues. We will protect ordinary members of the public from this abuse of power.

We will legislate to remove legal immunity from industrial action which has disproportionate or excessive effect. Members of the public and employers will be able to seek injunctions to prevent industrial action in these circumstances. Any strike action will also have to be approved by a majority of all members eligible to vote and ballots will have to be repeated at regular intervals if negotiations are extended.

TRANSPORT

Our railways are already improving now they have been liberated into the private sector. Passenger numbers are up; more people are using the railways every day. Investment is up: Railtrack plans to spend 14 billion each day on improving stations and maintaining and renewing the network. The new train operators are committed to investing £1.5 billion in new and refurbished rolling stock.

And new fare-paying in real terms for the first time in a generation, with guaranteed price controls keeping fare increases below the level of inflation until at least 2003. We intend to build on this growing success story to create a thriving railway network for the new century.

We will complete the successful transfer of British Rail into the commercial sector.

We now want to draw in private investment to modernise London Underground and improve services to passengers.

We will bring forward plans to privatise London Underground. Proceeds from privatisation will be recycled in order to modernise the network within five years – creating an underground system to serve the capital in the 21st century. We will regulate fares so they rise by no more than inflation for at least four years after privatisation. We will also protect services – including the Travelcard concessionary fares.

After completing the modernisation of the network the majority of the remaining surplus from privatisation will be channelled into additional support for transport investment in London and elsewhere in the country.

We will continue to encourage public transport. In particular, we will use the existing funding for local authorities to promote developments which make it easier to transfer from rail to bus.

We recognise the needs of road users, and will continue to work with the private sector to sustain our road-building and maintenance programme. Already under the Private Finance Initiative the private sector is contributing some £1 billion to investment in roads and achieving significant savings in construction costs.

We will also tackle road congestion by introducing new regional traffic control centres, by ensuring that local authorities have the necessary powers to speed limits, and by ensuring that local authorities have the necessary powers to speed limits, and by ensuring that local authorities have the necessary powers to speed limits.

We will continue to build on our record of improving safety on our roads. We will continue to build on our record of improving safety on our roads. We will continue to build on our record of improving safety on our roads.

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introduced throughout the Prison Service. Home leave has been cut back – down half in two years.

■ We have made witness intimidation a crime. 500 people were charged with that offence in 1995 alone.

■ We have stepped up the fight against drugs and organised crime, giving the Security Service powers to support the police and Customs and Excise in tracking down the serious criminals.

7 LAW, ORDER AND SECURITY

People have a right to sleep safely in their homes and walk safely on the streets. Governments have a duty to maintain that security.

Our reforms are aimed at ensuring that crime does not pay. And they are working – the pessimists and the scoffers are wrong. Recorded crime has fallen every year for the last four years. It is now 10 per cent lower than it was in 1992. That is over half a million fewer crimes – the biggest drop since records were first kept in the middle of the 19th century.

But crime is still too high. We must do more. Our aim is to keep crime falling over the lifetime of the next parliament. This is what we will do.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Anti-social behaviour and petty crime disrupt communities and spread human misery. The police are rightly now vigorously tackling problems such as graffiti, vandalism and drunkenness. Where such behaviour goes unchecked more serious crimes will follow.

We will support chief constables who develop local schemes to crack down on petty crime and improve public order.

Closed-circuit television has proved enormously successful in increasing public safety.

We will fulfil the Prime Minister's pledge to support the installation of 10,000 CCTV cameras in town centres and public places in the years to 1999.

We will provide £75 million over the lifetime of the next parliament to continue extending CCTV to town centres, villages and housing estates up and down the country that want to bid for support.

We will also continue to take other steps to improve the safety of our streets and communities. In this parliament we have given the police power to seize alcohol from under 18s caught drinking in public. The police have been given the power to stop and search in a specified area for up to 48 hours if they reasonably believe people to be carrying knives.

Identity cards can also make a contribution to safer communities.

We will introduce a voluntary identity card scheme.

based on the new photographic driving licence. It will, for example, enable retailers to identify youngsters trying to buy alcohol and cigarettes or rent classified videos when they are under age.

TACKLING JUVENILE CRIME

A fifth of all crime is committed by under-18s. We are encouraging schools to reduce truancy through the publication of league tables and by supporting local projects to tackle the problem. We are developing a network of local teams to identify children who are at risk of turning to crime and to take early steps to address the factors which put them at risk.

We will encourage these local child crime teams to refer children from primary school age upwards who are at risk of, or actually, offending to programmes to tackle their behaviour and fully involve their parents.

The courts would be able to impose an order – a Parental Control Order – on the parents of children whom they believed could keep control of their children but were refusing to do so.

Courts will be given the power to attach conditions to Parental Control Orders. Conditions might include a requirement to keep their children at night, taking their children to and from school, attending a drug rehabilitation clinic or going to sessions to improve their skills as parents. Parents who breached these conditions – in defiance of the court – would face a range of possible sanctions.

Appearing before a youth court should be a daunting experience for the juvenile concerned. All too often it is not. At the moment about a third of all juveniles appearing before the youth courts are discharged without any punishment at all. This sends all the wrong signals to young offenders – who then feel they can get away with crime.

We will give the courts the power to impose speedy sanctions on youngsters, involving wherever possible an element of reparation to the victim. The promising service – rather than social services – will be responsible for enforcing community punishments for under-18s.

Persistent juvenile offenders need to be properly punished. We are piloting a tough new regime, with a heavy emphasis on discipline, at a young offenders' institution at the military prison in Colchester. In 1994 we doubled the maximum sentence for 15 to 17-year-olds to two years detention in a young offenders' institution. We have given the courts the freedom to allow the publication of the names of convicted juveniles. We will give the courts the power to detain persistent 12 to 14-year-old offenders in secure training centres once the places become available.

We have given the courts the power to impose electronically monitored curfews on 10 to 15-year-old offenders. We will introduce pilot schemes to test their effectiveness. If successful we will consider extending them nationwide.

CATCHING, CONVICTING AND PUNISHING

We back the police every inch of the way. There are now about 16,000 more police officers – and over 18,000 more civilians helping them – than when we took office. We are providing chief constables with the resources to recruit 5,000 extra police constables in the three years to 2000.

We support police initiatives to target the hard core of persistent criminals. Intelligence is crucial for this. We will establish a national crime squad to provide an improved nationally co-ordinated approach to organised crime.

Once caught, criminals must be convicted and then properly punished. The public need to be protected. We have reformed the right to silence, despite opposition from Labour. The number of suspects refusing to answer police questions has nearly halved as a result.

We have piloted curfew orders for adult offenders. They have been shown to keep criminals indoors – curbing their freedom as a punishment – and keeping them out of trouble in the meantime.

We will extend electronically monitored curfew orders nationwide for those aged 16 and over.



Spreading the word: ministerial copies of the manifesto at the Central Office launch

Persistent offenders account for a high proportion of all crime. Prison works – not only as a deterrent, but in keeping criminals off the street. Those sent to prison are less likely to re-offend on release than those given a community punishment. We will provide another 8,500 prison places by the year 2000.

We will introduce minimum sentences for violent and persistent criminals to help protect the public more effectively, reversing Labour's wrecking amendments to our tough Crime Bill.

Anyone convicted of a second serious sexual or violent crime, like rape or armed robbery, will get an automatic life sentence.

Persistent house burglars and dealers in hard drugs will receive mandatory minimum prison sentences of three and seven years respectively.

We will restore honesty in sentencing by ensuring that criminals serve the sentence intended without automatic early release.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

Concern for the victim must be at the heart of our entire approach to the criminal justice system. We will continue to give strong backing to Victim Support.

We will give courts in all cases the discretion to allow witnesses to give evidence anonymously if they believe them to be at risk from reprisals.

We will also take action to allow a judge to stop a defendant from personally questioning the victim in rape cases and other cases where the victim is particularly vulnerable.

Conservatives are on the side of the victims not the criminals.

Strengthening the fight against City crime

Crime that takes place through manipulation of financial accounts and markets is as serious as crime on the streets.

The City's unchallenged position as Europe's most dynamic and successful financial centre owes a great deal to its reputation for honesty and fair dealing. We will help ensure that this reputation is maintained.

We will bring forward in the next parliament a package of measures designed to modernise the current systems for dealing with City fraud.

This will include legislation to allow the Inland Revenue to pass confidential information to the police, the Serious Fraud Office and the financial regulators to assist in the investigation of cases involving serious financial fraud.

We will also remove the remaining legal obstacles to the controlled exchange of confidential information between the police and the regulators in this kind of case.

FASTER JUSTICE

Justice delayed is justice denied. It is wrong that people who are innocent should face an excessive wait before the start of their trial. The guilty need to be held to account for their actions promptly. And victims should be given the chance to draw a line under their experience as quickly as possible. We are determined to speed up justice without diminishing the genuine rights of every citizen to a fair trial.

Last October the government set up a review of delays in the criminal justice system. It made a series of detailed recommendations. We see merit in those recommendations and will seek the views of interested parties. We believe that taken together they could dramatically speed up the prosecution process, bringing the guilty to justice and acquitting the innocent more quickly.

All defendants would appear in court the next working day after they were charged. At least half of them would be convicted the next day compared with just 3 per cent at the moment. And the time taken to bring juveniles to court would be cut from ten weeks to a matter of days.

CIVIL JUSTICE

The civil justice system of this country is a vital part of its competitive economy and has a high international reputation. The commercial courts attract substan-

tial litigation from all over the world, generating significant foreign earnings. We will seek to maintain the high standing of these courts.

We have greatly improved the service the civil courts provide for the aggrieved citizen. The simple procedure for small claims has been extended to claims up to £3,000. For large claims the county court now provides an efficient local service with specialised courts in many locations around the country, leaving the High Court to deal with the more complex and difficult issues.

We will push ahead with the major reforms now under way which will greatly speed up the process and improve the delivery of justice without imposing additional burdens on the taxpayer.

THE LEGAL PROFESSION

We will ensure that the framework in which the legal profession operates is responsive to the changing needs of our people and is one in which unjustified restrictions have no place. We have, for example, given most solicitors rights of audience in the higher courts under appropriate conditions.

LEGAL AID

People are rightly concerned about the rising costs of legal aid. We have taken many steps to control the burden and to deny access to legal aid to the "apparently wealthy" – those who qualified technically, but whose lifestyles suggested they should not.

But more is required: we will change the structure of legal aid to ensure that it is like other vital public services, funded within defined cash limits.

This will enable us to identify priorities and serve them much more efficiently than the present system.

DRUGS

Drugs are a menace to the very fabric of our society. They ruin the life of addicts and their families. They can destroy whole neighbourhoods. The promising youth of today can too easily become the laid-back drop-outs of tomorrow, turning to crime and violence.

The Conservative Government has a comprehensive strategy, launched in 1996, committed to fighting drugs in communities and in schools. It is tough on criminals and vigilant at our ports. It is respected throughout the world.

We spend over £500 million every year in tackling all aspects of drug problems.

We will continue the fight against drugs through a co-ordinated approach: being tough on pushers; reducing demand by educating young people; tackling drug abuse at local level through Drug Action Teams; working "No" to legalising drugs; and working with international agencies and foreign governments to resist the menace spreading.

This pernicious evil has to be fought by all of us.

THE NATION

OUR RECORD

Many of our old cities have been regenerated through a partnership of public and private investment.

■ The area of green belt has doubled since 1974.

■ Water and air quality in the UK have improved significantly.

■ We are one of only a few nations on course to meet our commitment to return emissions of all greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2000.

■ The Lottery has been established as the most successful in the world – raising £3 billion for good causes in a little over two years.

■ More support is now given to arts and heritage than at any time in our nation's history. We now provide nearly 20 per cent more for the arts than the last Labour Government, over and above inflation.

■ British talent was this year nominated for 30 Oscars. British music is again receiving international acclaim. The industry is worth £2.5 billion, more

than shipbuilding or electric components one in five CDs and records sold anywhere has a British connection.

■ There is record investment in our sports facilities. Already the Lottery has provided £480 million for sport, including the planned British Academy of Sport, English National Stadium and for the first time direct funding for British athletes.

■ We have continued to stand up for British interests in Europe, protecting our outposts of the Social Chapter, maintaining our border controls, and preserving our Budget rebate – worth £18 billion since it was introduced.

■ We have the most professional Armed Forces in the world. We have modernised our nuclear deterrent by replacing Polaris with Trident.

8 THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO LIVE

Britain is admired the world over. Every year, millions of tourists travel here to enjoy our heritage and culture, our cities and countryside, our way of life. Our nation's history is an anchor in a sea of change. We need to protect, cherish and build upon what is great about our country, so our children grow up in a better Britain. We also must make sure that everyone, wherever they live, has the support of a strong, tolerant and civilised community.

Our aim is for this generation and future generations to take pride in Britain as the best place in the world to live.

BRITAIN'S CITIES

London is one of the world's greatest cities. It is livelier than ever. Our vision of its future is set out in a separate manifesto.

Many of our cities have undergone a complete transformation over the last decade. We have promoted partnerships – through schemes such as Urban Development Corporations, the Single Regeneration Budget and City Pride – to attract private enterprise and investment back to inner cities. These initiatives are bringing hope, opportunity, and prosperity to what were once wastelands of urban decline.

As the country thrives and becomes more prosperous, one of our central tasks is to apply the same approach to transform the legacy of soulless, decaying public housing estates. They are places that suffer from the very worst kind of poverty – poverty of aspiration.

We have already made a start spending over £2 billion over the last ten years on improving 500 of the worst estates. And we have shown how it is possible to tackle the economic and social problems alongside new investment in buildings – where possible, bringing in a greater mix of public tenants and private housing to create a more balanced community. Now we will extend this approach, focusing the Single Regeneration Budget to launch a combined attack on crime, unemployment and underachievement, and developing the Government's partnership with the private sector to help fund the massive investment that will be required.

Over the next decade, we aim to raise some £25 billion of new private investment in housing estates by encouraging tenants in more than half of the remaining public sector housing stock to opt for transferring their homes to new landlords. These transfers will only occur where tenants choose this route to improve their estates.

We will use this approach to regenerate the worst housing estates and transform the lives of those who live on them – targeting support for programmes to improve education standards, employment and crime prevention alongside new private sector investment. As well as this attack on poor housing, we will continue to help the homeless. We will carry through our planned extension of the Rough Sleepers Initiative from London to other big cities. We will provide sufficient hostel places to ensure that no one needs sleep out on the streets.

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Britain is blessed with some of the most

beautiful countryside in Europe. We need to protect the best of countryside whilst ensuring good jobs, and living conditions for people who live there.

We have to strike a balance: our rural communities must not become rural museums, but remain vibrant places to live and work. We will make sure government departments work together to ensure that balance is kept.

We will continue to protect the green belt from development making sure that deserted and under-used urban land is developed in preference to greenfield sites.

We will use the planning system to ensure that more new homes are built on reclaimed sites in our towns and cities. We will aim for more than 60 per cent of all new homes to be built on derelict sites.

This will reduce the pressure to build in our countryside and expand choice where it is needed most.

We will support our rural communities, by giving special rate support to small village shops and post offices. The planning system can do more to help too.

We will introduce a new Rural Business Use Class to encourage job creation in the countryside.

We will increase support for schemes which promote care for the countryside – like Countryside Stewardship. We believe participation in traditional country pursuits, including fishing, is a matter for individuals. A Conservative government will not introduce legislation that interferes with the rights of people to take part in these activities.

We will also encourage managed public access to private land – in agreement with farmers and landowners – but strongly resist a general right to roam, which would damage the countryside and violate the right to private property.

We aim to double Britain's forest cover over the next 50 years. We will continue to encourage tree planting by targeting grants, encouraging investment in wood processing, and using new freedoms with the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

We will continue to provide robust support to the British beef industry through the BSE crisis until its long-term strength is restored. We will vigorously pursue the eradication of BSE in the United Kingdom, as we have been doing successfully for the last eight years. We will spare no efforts in our fight against the unwarranted ban on British beef exports.

Public health and food safety have been the Government's top priorities throughout the BSE crisis.

We will tighten up control over food safety by appointing a powerful and independent Chief Food Safety Adviser and Food Safety Council to advise government.

We will continue to push for fundamental reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, moving away from production support to measures that will give our farmers the opportunity to compete while safeguarding the rural environment. We will ensure that no change to the Common Agriculture Policy unfairly disadvantages British farmers.

Fishing is a vital industry in many parts of coastal Britain. We will continue our fight to secure a prosperous long-term future for the industry and sustainable management of our fish stocks.

We will insist that the IGC and elsewhere on measures to stop quotas hopping and prevent the vessels of other countries from using UK fishing quotas. The integrity of our 6 and 12 mile fishing limits is not negotiable. We reject any idea of a single European fishing fleet.

We believe that fishermen should have more say in decisions affecting their industry. We will press the European Commission to establish regional committees to give fishermen a direct influence in fishing policy. We will use these committees to develop new ways of managing quota and regulating fisheries which are more sensitive to the industry's needs.

ANIMAL WELFARE

A civilised society respects its animals. Britain will continue to take the lead in improving standards of animal welfare in Europe. In 1985 we secured a major breakthrough in the treatment of animals in transport. In 1986 we won victory in our campaign to ban veal crates throughout the EU. We are determined that standards should continue to rise and that all EU countries should have to meet them.

We will seek to ensure that all European countries have to raise animal welfare standards.

We are not going to take any risks with rabies. There may however be ways other than quarantine which maintain or increase protection for public health, while improving the welfare of pets and reducing the costs to travellers. We will publish a Green Paper on rabies protection, setting out all the options including the existing controls, early in the new parliament.

BRITAIN'S ENVIRONMENT

Britain has an enviable track record in protecting our environment. Our rivers, beaches and water are cleaner and we are using our energy more efficiently. We are leading the world in reducing the level of the "greenhouse gases" that cause global warming and pressing for policies that will enable the world to sustain development without long-term damage to the environment. Our Green Manifesto is published separately.

We have clear objectives to build on this record. We set tough, but affordable targets, with published environmental strategies to improve air quality and banish city smog – with tighter standards on vehicle emissions and pollution crackdowns around the country. We aim for sustained improvements in water quality, at a pace which industry and consumers can afford. We will develop labelling of products that gives consumers information to show the environmental impact of how they were made.

In addition, we will continue to use the tax system and other incentives to encourage the use of vehicles and fuel which do not pollute the environment. And, we will continue to explore policies based on the principle of polluter pays: those who contaminate land, pollute the environment or produce harmful waste should be made responsible for their actions and pay for the consequences.

BRITAIN – A TOLERANT COUNTRY

Tolerance, civility and respect have always been hallmarks of our nation. It is thanks to them that we have an excellent record on race relations. Everybody, regardless of colour or creed, has the right to go about his or her

life free from the threat of intimidation. We are taking tough action to tackle harassment. Under proposals in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it will be a crime to behave in a way which causes someone else to be harassed. The maximum penalty will be six months in prison.

Firm, but fair, immigration controls underpin good race relations. We will ensure that, while genuine asylum seekers are treated sympathetically, people do not abuse these provisions to avoid normal immigration controls.

A WORLD LEADER OF SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE

Britain is enjoying a cultural renaissance. British music, films, television, fashion, art and food are winning plaudits the world over. They add excitement, fun and enjoyment to our lives. Our success brings pride to everyone.

The National Lottery, which John Major set up, will pump billions of pounds into Britain's good causes. Its proceeds will weave a new, rich thread of opportunity and charity into the tapestry of British life. In addition to benefiting major national institutions, about half of the awards are for amounts under £25,000 – benefiting local communities up and down the country. We will encourage new ways of distributing awards to support the performing arts – through support for amateur productions and community events, providing more musical instruments, and helping productions tour round the country.

The National Lottery will also help us train and promote British sporting talent. The English National Stadium and British Academy of Sport, funded by the Lottery, will be new focal points for sporting events and excellence. We will encourage more young people to play sport, by ensuring every school plays a minimum level of sport, including competitive sports, and developing a network of Sporting Ambassadors – sporting celebrities who will visit schools to inspire young people. We also encourage the Sports Council to use Lottery money to employ over 1,000 additional community sports coaches to assist in primary schools.

The development of young talent is important in all fields.

We will encourage the use of Lottery money to train young athletes aiming to represent Britain at the Olympics. We want these to be a showcase of British excellence. Britain will be able to look back on past achievements with pride, and look forward with confidence.

9 EUROPE AND THE WORLD

Britain is a world leader as well as a European nation. Our economic strength, our history and our language make us a global trading nation with links right around the world. Only the United Kingdom is a member of the European Union, the United Nations Security Council, the Commonwealth, Nato and the Group of Seven leading industrial nations. In the Gulf, Bosnia, Cyprus and Northern Iraq, John Major has shown how our nation can contribute to world peace.

We will continue to work with international partners to secure peace and stability in areas of tension such as former Yugoslavia; in Kashmir; in Cyprus; and in the Middle East. We will promote reform of the United Nations to make it a more effective organisation for securing international stability. Britain will continue to deploy our outstanding Armed Forces as peacekeepers under the United Nations. And we will support the aspirations of the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and others to join the European Union and Nato.

After the transfer of Hong Kong, we will work under the terms of the Joint Declaration to help sustain the prosperity and way of life of the people of Hong Kong and build on the substantial British interests that will remain.

We will continue to support the Commonwealth, our unique global network, to encourage the spread of democracy, as set out in the Harare Declaration. We will focus our aid programme to encourage sustainable development in countries that are growing towards self-sufficiency under democratic government. We have taken the lead in alleviating the burden of debt for the world's poorest countries. We also have significant flows of private investment to developing economies. We are more than achieving the long term UN target of 1 per cent of GDP for overseas aid.

We will also continue to provide leadership in Europe and internationally on environmental issues, building on the Rio Conference to encourage sustainable development – meeting our commitment to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 10 per cent by 2000 levels by 2010 to prevent climate change. The Prime Minister has committed himself to attending the next UN Environmental Conference in June.

BRITAIN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

We believe that in an uncertain, competitive world, the nation state is a rock of security. A nation's common heritage, culture, values and outlook are a precious source of stability. Nationhood gives people a sense of belonging.

The Government has

■ Referendum guarantee on single currency ■ Accountable government ■ Preserving the union

Continued from previous page
government will not allow Britain to be part of a federal European state.

The diversity of Europe's nations is its strength. As more nations join the European Union, it needs to become flexible not more rigid. We must also ensure that any developments which only include some members do not work to the disadvantage of others.

Our priorities for Europe's development will be enlargement of the Community, completion of the single market, reform of the European Court of Justice, and further strengthening of the role of national parliaments.

We will seek more co-operation between national governments on areas of common interest — defence, foreign policy and the fight against international crime and drugs. We also believe the European Union itself should do less, but do it better. So we have proposed incorporating the principle of subsidiarity — that the European Union should only do that which cannot be done by member states acting alone — into the treaty.

This is how we are approaching the Inter-Governmental Conference.

We will argue for a flexible Europe which fully accommodates the interests and aspirations of all its member states and where any new proposals have to be open to all and agreed by all. We will not accept other changes to the Treaty that would further centralise decision-making, reduce national sovereignty, or remove our right to permanent opt-outs.

We will retain Britain's veto and oppose further extension of qualified majority voting in order to ensure we can prevent policies that would be harmful to the national interest. We will defend the rights of national parliaments and oppose more powers being given to the European Parliament at the expense of national parliaments.

We will take whatever steps are necessary to keep our frontier controls. We will resist attempts to change the inter-governmental nature of co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs. We will not accept the development of new legal rights that extend the concept of European Citizenship. Britain's rebate has so far saved British taxpayers £18 billion and we will protect it.

One of the greatest challenges Europe faces is to cut unemployment and make its businesses competitive. Here Britain is leading the way. We will continue to argue for deregulation and lower costs on Europe's businesses, the policies that have helped give Britain one of the strongest economies in Europe. We will not put that achievement at risk by signing up to the social chapter, which would open the door to imposing the high costs of the European social model on British business. Once Britain accepted the social chapter we could not stop many of these damaging policies being imposed on us by qualified majority voting.

We will insist that any new treaty recognises that our opt-out from the social chapter enables Britain to be exempt from the working time directive, and prevents any abuse of our opt-out. And, we will not accept a new employment chapter in any revised treaty, which would expose British businesses to new costs.

We made it clear in the previous chapter that we will continue to work for further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the lifting of the worldwide ban on British beef, and insist on measures to stop quotas hopping by foreign fishing vessels.

Protecting Britain's interests demands tough, experienced negotiation. John Major has proved he has these qualities — including the resolve to say no when necessary even if that means being isolated. Labour have said they would never want Britain to be isolated in Europe: they would damage Britain's success by undermining our new, signing up to the social chapter and following in others' footsteps — even where they lead in the wrong direction.

The support policies that would fragment the United Kingdom's influence within a Europe of regions. The Liberal Democrats welcome the end of the nation state.

Only the Conservatives can be trusted to stand up for Britain in Europe: our national interest must be protected.

A SINGLE CURRENCY: OUR REFERENDUM GUARANTEE

The creation of a European single currency would be of enormous significance for all European states whether they are members or not. We must take account of all the consequences for Britain of such a major development of policy. John Major secured for us at Maastricht an opt-out from the commitment to enter a single currency. It is only because of this opt-out that we have the right to negotiate and then decide whether it is in Britain's interest to join. It is in our national interest to take part in the negotiations. Not to do so would be an abdication of responsibility. A single currency would affect us, whether we were in or out. We need to participate in discussions in order to ensure the rules are not fixed against our interests. The national interest is not served by exercising our option — one way or the other — before we have to.

For a single currency to come into effect, European economies will have to meet crucial criteria. On the information currently available, we believe that it is very unlikely that there will be sufficient convergence of economic conditions across Europe for a single currency to



Cabinet Ministers, left to right, Michael Howard, Malcolm Rifkind and Kenneth Clarke, listening to John Major at the launch of the Conservative manifesto yesterday

proceed safely on the target date of January 1, 1999. We will not include legislation on the single currency in the first Queen's Speech. If it cannot proceed safely, we believe it would be better for Europe to delay any introduction of a single currency rather than rush ahead to meet an artificial timetable. We will argue this case in the negotiations that lie ahead.

We believe it is in our national interest to keep our options open to take a decision on a single currency when all the facts are before us. If a single currency is created, without sustainable convergence, a British Conservative government will not be part of it.

If, during the course of the next parliament, a Conservative government were to conclude that it was in our national interest to join a single currency, we have given a guarantee that no such decision would be implemented unless the British people gave their express approval in a referendum.

DEFENCE IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

The old rivalries of the Cold War have been replaced by new tensions. Britain must be able to react rapidly to protect our security and interests around the globe.

Our Armed Forces are the most professional in the world. We have cut unnecessary bureaucracy and increased efficiency, and directed money to support our services in the frontline. We have made the changes necessary to adapt our services to the threats which we might now face. We have set out defence plans based on stable levels of funding. There is no need for a defence review, which would raise fear and uncertainty about the future.

We will continue to ensure the Services have the modern weapons they need to guarantee their superiority against potential aggressors. We will make sure we can conduct military operations throughout the world, and develop our capability to deploy the three services together and rapidly, including the ability to transport heavy equipment into an operational zone. We will take part in ballistic missile research so we can decide whether we should procure any such system for the United Kingdom.

We will continue to target our efforts on recruiting for the Armed Forces. We will set up an Army Foundation College,

which will provide 1,300 places for 16 and 17-year-olds who want to join the Army. We will also enable the reserve forces to play a more active role in operations.

We appreciate the enormous value of cadet forces, and our current plans include funding resources to encourage their further development.

We will continue to support Britain's defence industry, and we will work with companies to identify the technologies of the future.

NATO will remain the cornerstone of our security. We will resist attempts to bring the Western European Union under the control of the European Union, and ensure that defence policy remains a matter for sovereign nations.

IN THE CONSTITUTION

Alone in Europe, the history of the United Kingdom has been one of stability and security. We owe much of that to the strength and stability of our constitution — the institutions, laws and traditions that bind us together as a nation. Our constitution has been stable, but not static. It has been woven over the centuries — the product of hundreds of years of knowledge, experience and history.

Radical changes that alter the whole character of our constitutional balance could unravel what generations of our predecessors have created. To preserve that stability in future — and the freedoms and rights of our citizens — we need to continue a process of evolution, not revolution.

Conservatives embrace evolutionary change that solves real problems and improves the way our constitution works. In recent years we have opened up government, devolved power and accountability, and introduced reforms to make Parliament work more effectively. It is that evolutionary process that we are committed to continue.

OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

In recent years we have taken significant steps to open up government to public scrutiny, and give individuals more information to hold government and public services to account.

We have introduced a code on access to government information, policed by the Ombudsman. We have published information on the workings of govern-

ment previously held secret — including the composition of Cabinet Committees, and the structure of the Security and Intelligence Services. We have introduced a new Civil Service Code, and reformed the process for public appointments. We are pledged to legislate on the commitments in our 1993 White Paper on Open Government, including a statutory right of access by citizens to personal records held about them by the government and other public authorities. And we have set up the Nolan Committee and have implemented its proposals to ensure that the highest standards are maintained in public life.

But our reforms go even wider than that. We have transferred power from central bureaucracies to local organisations such as school governors and hospital trusts. We have introduced the Citizen's Charter. We have also required them to publish information on their performance — information which enables the local community to keep a check on standards and apply pressure where needed.

Wherever possible, we are widening competition and choice in public services. We showed in Chapter 6 how we wished to push this agenda forward.

Regional government would be a dangerously centralising measure — taking power away from elected local authorities. We wish to go in the opposite direction, shifting power to the local neighbourhood — for example by giving more power to parish councils.

PARLIAMENT
Parliament — alongside the Crown and our legal system — is one of the three key institutions that uphold our constitution. The supremacy of Parliament is fundamental to our democracy, and the guarantee of our freedoms.

The last 17 years have seen many changes to strengthen Parliament and make it more effective — the flourishing of select committees, new procedures to scrutinise European legislation, reform of Parliament's working day, and a budget that brings together tax and spending.

We have therefore already done much to improve the way Parliament works and will do more. We have accepted the proposal from the Public Service Select Committee and put before the House of Commons a clear new statement of the principles underlying ministerial

accountability to Parliament. All these developments have made Parliament open to the citizen, and the government more accountable. In the next session of Parliament we will continue this careful reform.

To give Parliament more time to consider legislation thoroughly we will extend the Queen's Speech to cover not only legislation for the immediate year but also provisional plans for legislation in the year after that.

This will mean that more draft bills will be subject to public scrutiny before they reach the floor of the House of Commons. It will give Select Committees more time to take evidence and report. And this should also mean better legislation. We do not believe there is a case for more radical reform that would undermine the House of Commons. A new Bill of Rights, for example, would risk transferring power away from parliament to legal courts — undermining the democratic supremacy of parliament as representatives of the people. Whilst this may be a necessary check in other countries which depend upon more formalised written constitutions, we do not believe it is appropriate to the UK.

Nor do we favour changes in the system of voting in parliamentary elections that would break the link between an individual member of parliament and his constituents. A system of proportional representation would be more likely to produce unstable coalition governments that are unable to provide effective leadership — with crucial decisions being dependent on compromise deals hammered out behind closed doors. This is not the British way.

We have demonstrated we are not against change where it is practical and beneficial. But fundamental changes which have not been fully thought through — such as opposition proposals on the House of Lords — would be extremely damaging. We will oppose change for change's sake.

THE UNION

The Union between Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England underpins our nation's stability. The Conservative commitment to the United Kingdom does not mean ignoring the distinctive individuality of the different nations. On the contrary, we have gone further in recognising that diversity than any previous government. We are publishing separate manifestos for Wales and Scotland. While preserving

the role of parliament at the centre of the Union, we have given new powers to the Scottish Grand Committee and Welsh Grand Committee — enabling Scottish and Welsh MPs to call Ministers to account and debate legislation which affects those countries — something that would be impossible with separate assemblies. For the first time, Welsh members of parliament can ask their questions to Ministers in Welsh in Wales. Most recently we have similarly extended the basic powers of the Northern Ireland Grand Committee.

We believe this is the right way to go. By contrast, the development of new assemblies in Scotland and Wales would create strains which could well pull apart the Union. That would create a new layer of government, which would be hungry for power. It would risk rivalry and conflict between these parliaments or assemblies and the parliament at Westminster. And it would raise serious questions about whether the representation of Scottish and Welsh MPs at Westminster — and their role in matters affecting English affairs — could remain unchanged. Nor do we believe it would be in the interests of the Scottish or Welsh people. A Scottish tax-raising parliament, for example, could well affect the choice of where new investment locates in the United Kingdom.

In a world where people want security, nothing would be more dangerous than to unravel a constitution that binds our nation together and the institutions that bring us stability. We will continue to fight for the strength and diversity that benefits all of us as a proud union of nations.

NORTHERN IRELAND
While we cherish the Union and Northern Ireland's place within it, we recognise that there exist within the Province special circumstances which require further action to be taken.

After a quarter of a century we wish to see the unique and originally temporary system of direct rule ended and a successful restoration of local accountable democracy achieved. We want to see this brought about in a form which carries the broadest agreement possible. And we want to see the rights, traditions and interests of all parts of the community recognised within any such agreement. We will accordingly continue to pursue a policy of dialogue and negotiation with and between the democratic Northern Ireland parties. We will continue to underpin such negotiations with the guarantee that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland cannot and will not be changed without the broad consent of the people of Northern Ireland. At the same time we will continue to take whatever security measures are required to protect the people of Northern Ireland from those who seek to achieve their political goals by violent means.

We seek peace. But we will never be swayed by terrorist violence nor will we ever compromise our principles with those who seek to overthrow the rule of law by force.

A choice of two futures

AT THIS election the British people face a stark choice. A choice of two futures.

They can elect to continue down the road of success and achievement. An opportunity that has been hard won by the efforts and sacrifices of the British people. An opportunity that has only come about because successive Conservative governments have been determined to face up to the long term problems facing Britain, and take the tough steps needed to arrest our slow decline.

Or they can elect to take a huge risk with that future — the future of themselves, their children, their nation — by handing over the government of the country to politicians who have fought, opposed and denigrated every step that has been taken to restore Britain's economic health and standing in the world. Politicians whose own declared policies would burden the United Kingdom with new spending and taxation, new regulations, and new threats to the stability and sovereignty of the nation itself.

You can only be sure with the Conservative

A CHOICE OF TWO FUTURES — 25 PLEDGES FOR THE NATION

The Enterprise Centre of Europe

TAX AND SPENDING Keep tight control of public spending priorities, aiming for our target of a 20p basic rate of income tax over the next parliament.

PRICES AND MORTGAGES Stick to the policies which have delivered the lowest inflation levels and mortgage for a generation, meeting our inflation target of 2.5% or less.

JOBS Protect jobs by keeping Britain out of the European Social Chapter; build on our record of falling unemployment; and help get the long term unemployed back to work — including by requiring those on benefit for some time to undertake work experience on a community project.

ENTERPRISE Support growth and investment by keeping Britain the lowest tax major economy in Europe, pursuing Britain's global trade opportunities and curbing unnecessary regulations.

SMALL BUSINESS Reform business

rates to help small businesses. **THE FUTURE** Keep Britain ahead in the technology of the future, encouraging new entertainment and information services, and using the Millennium Lottery Fund to give people access to new computers and information links in schools, libraries, and other public places.

Opportunity and Ownership for Individuals and Families

HELP FOR FAMILIES Give priority to reducing tax bills for families looking after dependent children or relatives by allowing one partner's unused personal allowance to be transferred to a working spouse where they have these responsibilities.

HELP FOR CARERS Help family members with heavy responsibilities caring for a relative to take a much needed break through a new Respite Care Programme.

OWNERSHIP Encourage schemes

that help employees build a shareholding in the company they work for, alongside tax benefits for other savings schemes.

PENSIONS Transform pensions by providing all young people entering the workforce with a personal pension fund paid for by a rebate on their national insurance contributions, while maintaining a state pension guarantee.

CARE IN OLD AGE Make it easier for people to afford the cost of care in old age without giving up their house and savings.

SCHOOL STANDARDS Guarantee school standards by intervening directly to raise standards where schools or local education authorities are letting children down.

SCHOOL CHOICE Widen choice and diversity in schools, with more freedom for schools to develop their own character, more specialist schools, and a grammar school in every town where parents want that choice. We will also maintain our

nursery voucher scheme offering a choice of places for parents of all 4 year olds.

World Class Health and Public Services

NHS FUNDING PLEDGE Continue, year by year, to increase the real resources committed to the NHS, so NHS spending will continue to share in a growing economy.

FAMILY DOCTORS Enable all family doctors to provide a wider range of services in their surgeries and in practice-based cottage hospitals — offering faster and more local treatment.

CITIZEN'S CHARTER Continue to improve the standards and value for money of Britain's public services, giving those who use them more information and, where possible, wider choice.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES Introduce measures to protect the public against strikes that cause excessive

disruption to essential services.

A Safe and Civil Society

PUBLIC SAFETY Support local police schemes to crack down on petty crime, and continue our funding for the installation of TV security cameras in town centres and public places that want them throughout the next parliament.

JUVENILE CRIME Give the courts power to impose speedy sanctions on youngsters, including an element of reparation to the victim; and continue our war against drugs.

PERSISTENT CRIMINALS Ensure persistent house burglars and dealers in hard drugs receive mandatory minimum prison sentences.

A Confident, United and Sovereign Nation

QUALITY OF LIFE Continue the renaissance of our towns and cities, in particular harnessing private capital to regenerate the worst public housing estates; continue to protect our countryside and heritage; and use the National Lottery to help promote British sports, arts and culture.

THE ENVIRONMENT Maintain our international leadership role in protecting the environment, and continue improving air and water quality at home alongside effective conservation of our wildlife.

THE NATION Maintain the unity of the United Kingdom and preserve the stability of the Nation through an evolutionary — rather than revolutionary — approach to constitutional change.

EUROPE Seek a partnership of nation states in Europe, and not allow Britain to be part of a federal European state.

THE POUND Guarantee that Britain will not join a single currency in the next parliament unless the British people give their express approval in a referendum.

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The duke who pounded longest

Stella Tillyard on a reappraisal of a great Victorian who seemed to be not one man but many

With the generosity that runs through all his work, Christopher Hibbert acknowledges that anyone attempting a new book on Wellington necessarily labours in the shadow of Elizabeth Longford's great two-volume life which appeared in 1969 and 1972. What he does not add is that his predecessor's work had a context which has now vanished, the loss of which makes a new work an entirely different enterprise.

When Longford wrote her *Wellington*, a sense of deliverance from the horrors of war in Europe was still tangible, memories of slaughter and sacrifice still fresh. Wellington's reputation, encapsulating the national ability to triumph in and over adversity, and his character traits of severe austerity, painstaking practicality and the sacrifice of personal happiness to the service of Sovereign and State were still living things. Damage or alter them and something in the nation's understanding of itself would be damaged and altered too.

The reader may have had a sense that Longford loved her subject almost as a military commander, but he emerged unscathed, a hero whose great eccentricities reflected and had become part of the national character.

Thirty years on the biographer's landscape has new contours. In the first place as memories of world war fade, so does the importance of past wars that formed the prehistory of the great conflicts of our own century. In consequence, the men who embodied those struggles and triumphs are fading too; stripped of the lifeblood of memory, they have become buns on plinths, metallic myths of a bygone age.

In the second place — and not coincidentally — the parameters of national identity, of what it means to be British (or, more precisely, an Englishman) have recognisably shifted. In the mid-1960s the Britishness that Wellington seemed to embody was still prevalent. Loyalty, duty, reserve — many of

Longford's readers would have recognised these attributes in themselves and in their nation. But Thatcherism's go-getting, essentially selfish philosophy of choice has chipped away at the idea that service and self-sacrifice are essential, good and British qualities, while feminism has demanded a demonstrative emotionality in men that would have seemed as shocking 30 years ago as it was to Wellington himself.

Thus it is that Hibbert's duke comes into a very different world from that of his predecessor. Wellington's public reputation is at stake only among a few high Anglican historians who regard him as a traitor for having pushed through Catholic emancipation in 1829. He is an established figure in the national pantheon, but no longer a pattern for the nation.

Wise, then, Hibbert has decided to dwell relatively perfunctorily on Wellington's arts of generalship and statesmanship and to concentrate on the private man.

Not for nothing is Hibbert an admirer of Boswell. He has proved himself over a long career as a distinguished and popular historian to be a master portraitist of great men's private lives, and his *Wellington* is depicted in scores of captivating vignettes deftly built into a convincing and satisfying picture. If Elizabeth Longford showed us two Wellingtons — the charismatic military leader and the less likeable politician — Hibbert brings us four.

First comes Arthur Wesley, a gauche, impecunious Irish schoolboy who joined the Army at 18, went out to India as a colonel in 1796, and, after nine years and some help from his brother the Governor-General, came back Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley, a military hero, a rich man and a confirmed womaniser. But his mature character was not yet established. The man who would later strike others as master of the telling aphorism often seemed jejune and pompous; the proud philistine who would



A sun-lit old age: in Franz Winterhalter's *The First of May* (1851), Wellington presents a gift to Queen Victoria's son, Prince Arthur

declare of poets that "there is no believing a word they say... I have the worst opinion of them" was the absorbed reader of such fictional concoctions as *Illicit Love*, *Fashionable Involvements* and *Love at First Sight*.

It was in the Peninsula and as victor of Waterloo that Major-General Wellesley was transformed into the Iron Duke of Wellington, a military commander whose genius was the capacity to take infinite pains with his army and infinite care in his planning; it was in the aftermath of Waterloo

that this Wellington came home to his unhappy marriage — characteristically, he had undertaken it as a matter of honour — and perfected his persona as a man of bluff reserve who assuaged his loneliness with the attentions of a series of mistresses and female confidantes. He became the object of universal veneration and also of female longing, who was showered with money and titles, was written into novels and painted onto canvas. But Wellington fell rapidly from this eminence when he became Prime Minister in 1828.

The third Wellington Hibbert shows us is the strangely contradictory politician, the reactionary reformer. Wellington accepted the need for Catholic emancipation not as a right but as a way of avoiding civil war in his native Ireland; he declared that "the people are rotten to the core", but bowed to the inevitability of the Reform Act. For a while he garnered abuse and even hatred as a symbol of the old order that seemed to be passing. But in the last and most moving section of his book Hibbert brings us a fourth Wellington, who survived this un-

popularity to move into a sun-lit old age in which his dislike of the people was swamped by their patriotic regard for him as a figure embodying the new national greatness. Over a million people attended his funeral. "One cannot... think of England without him," wrote Queen Victoria. We can now, and we do, but Hibbert's excellent portrait reminds us of the losses as well as the gains of that separation.

Stella Tillyard's *Citizen Lord* is published this month by Chatto & Windus.

Story not song

Louise Doughty

BODIES OF WATER
By Rosanne Cash
Collins, £9.99
ISBN 0 573 06451 X

COUNTRY music is widely regarded with humour in this country — and it is often (erroneously) assumed that American singer-songwriters of the genre have had any sense of self-irony surgically removed. Rosanne Cash's collection of stories confirms this prejudice, although at her best, Cash has an acute eye and a fair wit.

Bodies of Water is a series of autobiographical musings which all too often resort to metaphorical meandering. In *The Arc of Loneliness*: "Deferred pain is the drug of choice — feeling seen in a mirror, framed by calculation and distance. Deferred pain is the heat that shapes the arc." Set to the right music and with a few beers inside you, this might conceivably be poetic. Read from the page when you are stone cold sober, it is meaningless drivel.

Idiosyncratic moments show that Cash is capable of a great deal more. A toddler licks the glimmer off the low-hanging ornaments of a Christmas tree and the next day, "when I changed her diaper, her poop was aglow with brilliant little flecks of silver and blue". Easily the best story is the simplest, called *Dinner*. A couple dine in New York with friends who break the news that they are going to have a baby. The narrators of the other stories are not nearly as self-deprecating or as honest. Unlike in song, if a character in fiction wants to have a catharsis, it must first be earned.



Rosanne Cash: could do better

Marthe's memorial

The first shock in this fascinating social documentary comes on its second page: the Princess Marthe Bibesco, star and beauty of the *beau monde* before the First World War, died as late as 1973. But she began young. Conceived in Paris, where her father was the Romanian Ambassador, she was born in Bucharest in 1886 and at the age of 15 was betrothed to the famous aviator and philanderer George Bibesco, scion of one of Romania's few princely houses. It was an exotic world to our eyes — Marthe was descended from the Othello of whom Shakespeare wrote — and the country, a brand new monarchy only a few years out of the Ottoman Empire, was an uneasy Balkan mix, struggling to identify with the West.

In due course, the princess became more at home in London and Paris than in Romania, whose sad, chaotic history threw her in and out of favour (she is currently in, with a foundation

Duncan Fallowell

ENCHANTRESS
Marthe Bibesco and Her World
By Christine Sutherland
John Murray, £20
ISBN 0 7195 5709 7

named after her). Success came fast, in Paris in 1908, on the publication of her first book at the age of 22.

Her social apogee came after the First World War, when her husband gave her a derelict family property, a Venetian-Byzantine Bibesco palace of fantastic charm in the Romanian countryside, where she entertained many of the great players on the international scene. As a hostess she was grander and sexier than Cunard, Colefax, Morrell. Her intimates included Alfonso XIII and the son of the Kaiser. Amazingly, she was the great love of Ramsay MacDonald's later life, though probably never slept with him. Her final admirer was Charles de Gaulle.

Marthe enjoyed the trappings of glamour, was dressed by Poiret, Chanel, Lanvin, travelled on the Orient Express, stayed at all the Ritzes and had that delightful teasing candour of immaturity which is so un-English. Later in life she said: "The only thing I regret, when I look in the mirror and see the lines around my eyes, is that I can't any more give the same aesthetic pleasure to strangers... But she had, too, the deeper glamour of a life touched by romance and tragedy, bound up as it was with the horrors of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century. Marthe was accused by Queen Marie of Romania after the



Marthe with her daughter, Valentine, on Valentine's wedding day

First World War of collaboration with the Germans, for having briefly lodged with the Thurn und Taxis family during it; and she also accepted hospitality from top Nazis on the eve of the Second.

Her story builds dramatically towards its end and moves into its defining, poignant context: the loss of her Romanian world first to the Nazis, then to the Communists, and her subsequent excommunication as an "enemy of the people". She escaped to Paris in the nick of time. After long machinations her daughter and son-in-law were released from prison to join her and — the improbabilities continue — they set up home in Cornwall. A. L. Rowse was a neighbour there. "She was a great woman — such courage," he says. "She never complained and never spoke of the riches and grandeur she lost; she

adored life and was determined to maintain standards at all costs. I thought she was magnificent."

In her final phase, the princess found herself having to write more desperately than ever — to pay two grandsons' school fees among other things. It is a curiously subdued and noble ending to a life lived on the grandest stage. Christine Sutherland is a conscientious guide to its twisting course, and very good too on the often complex political background, though she over-aggressively takes Marthe's side in the long-running feud with Queen Marie. Also the account of the post-Second World War period is too rapid, fewer than 20 pages. I wanted to know much more about the last 25 years. What for example happened to the grandson who went to Australia and changed his name to "Moore"?

Civilised or just plain lucky?

Roy Porter

GUNS, GERMS AND STEEL
The Fates of Human Societies
By Jared Diamond
Cape, £18.99
ISBN 0 22 402809 5

wheat, barley and pulses, and wild versions of what became domesticated cattle, sheep, pigs, dogs and horses.

Everywhere else, one or more of those favourable elements was missing. Evolving geologically separately, the Americas had never supported the right sort of large mammals to carry the burdens of

civilisation (llamas were localised, and you can do only so much with turkeys), while elsewhere, for instance, Australia, such creatures had been driven to extinction by early human beings.

And what of Africa? Africa has remarkably few native domesticable animals (you try taming a rhino, a hippo or even a zebra); some of the more easily cultivated parts of the continent — for example, the Cape — unfortunately possessed few native grains or trees that yielded abundant human food. Even elementary geography helped the whites. The great Eurasian continent has a west-east axis. It was thus reasonably easy for humans, beasts and crops to move all the way between Ireland and Indonesia and back. By con-



First farmers: early milking and churning. Europe had an abundance of domesticable animals



Coyne's justice: certainly not a fair cop

Antonia Logue

HEADBANGER
By Hugo Hamilton
Secker & Warburg, £12.99
ISBN 0 436 30418 5

Headbanger is as surprising as if Nick Hornby had suddenly delivered a Proustian epic.

Hamilton's central character is Garda Pat Coyne, a kamikaze cop on a quest to instil justice in the souls of all Ireland, starting with Dublin's gangland bosses. He is consumed by his vision of a better world until he goes off the rails altogether by torching cars, kidnapping the bosses' moll, and beating up his wife's art teacher. "Coyne's Justice", he calls his deeds, and with all the bloody-minded fervour of the extreme right wing he tumbles manically through Dublin's underworld. Coyne is a majestic creation. A

rigidly conservative and none-too-bright Garda has long been a staple of apocryphal pub stories, but with the exception of the village policeman in James Stephens's *The Crock of Gold*, and MacCruiskeen in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, the thick cop has been on a long career break in Irish literature. Few who read *The Last Shot* or *The Love Test* would have pegged Hamilton as the man to put him back on the beat.

Conventional wisdom dictates that writing about urban breakdown should be fraught with pietistic didacticism. Hamilton rejects this sermonising route and through an accretion of one-liners and humorous set-pieces he sketches a morally ambivalent world which is immensely compelling and engaging.

Hamilton took a tremendous risk in moving so dramatically from the territory he staked out in his previous three novels, but his gamble has added an extra dimen-

sion to his writing. Hamilton has discovered a real comic genius, and it is this, combined with the intelligence of his vision, which makes *Headbanger* such an impressive departure. If Flann O'Brien's lunatic Professor De Selby had genetically engineered a cross between the novels of Raymond Chandler and those of Patrick McCabe, this is what the progeny might well have looked like.

Antonia Logue's novel, Shadowbox, will be published by Bloomsbury next year.

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■ BRITISH Midland will launch Scandinavian flights on April 21 with fares of £98 for Copenhagen, Oslo at £138 and Gothenburg at £205. Details: 0345 554554.

■ BRITISH Airways has a £89 Apex between Gatwick, Plymouth, Newquay or Bristol. Details: 0345 222111.

■ THAI International has a £485 Super Saver Fare to Bangkok with domestic destinations such as Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai priced at £545. Details: 0171-499 9113.

■ SEOUL-BOUND business class passengers flying BA can take along a companion free. So two persons pay £3,977. Details: 0345 222111.

CITY BREAKS

in Europe and North America at savings of up to £40 a person are included in the new Spring-savers programme from British Airways Holidays. Prices start from £164 for two nights in Paris and £375 for three nights in Boston. Details: 01293 723100.

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■ FREE BULFIELD tours are included in short breaks from Amsterdam Travel Service. Prices from £169 a person for two nights in a one-star hotel to £285 for a five-star hotel with return flights from London and Manchester. Details: 01992 456056.

■ THREE NIGHTS in Havana and ten at a Cuban beach resort from £499 a person all-inclusive with flights every Tuesday from April 15 until June 24 are on offer from The Cuba Experience. Details: 0171-916 2233.

■ BALI with savings of up to £191 a person is on offer until June 30 from Silk Cut Travel with prices starting from £779 for a week's accommodation and return flights. Details: 01730 265211.

■ THE ATLAS Mountains, a Berber village and ancient port are included in a nine-day Moroccan tour with Travelbag Adventures leaving Heathrow on April 26. Priced from £485 a person. Details: 01420 541007.

■ JAMAICA for a fortnight for £399 a person including room and Unifit flight from Gatwick on April 28 is available from Advantage Travel Centres. Details: 0990 881888.

■ AN AEGEAN cruise aboard Cunard's *Vistaford* for 12 nights from May 5 for £1,413 a person is among the cut-price cruises on offer from Page & Moy. Details: 0116-250 7772.

■ VENICE for £219 a person for a week in a three-star hotel and flight from Manchester on May 11, available from Cosmos. Details: 0161-5799.



FREE TICKETS to National Trust properties including Sissinghurst Garden, Kent (above), and Trust for Scotland sites are on offer to those booking a minimum two-night stay featured in the new Freedom Breaks brochure from Consort Hotels. Details: 0345 660418.

HOTELS

THE four-star Arden Thistle Hotel in the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon has a Murder Mystery Weekend on May 16-18. The price of £165 per person includes a champagne reception, two nights' accommodation and full board. Details: 01789 294949.

■ ENTRANCE to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy from June 1 to August 10, as well as a two-course lunch at the nearby Brown's Hotel, is available for £17 per head or £23 for three courses. Details: 0171-518 4121.

■ KNOCKINAM Lodge on the Scottish coast at Portpatrick, Wigtownshire, has a two-night gourmet weekend available on April 11-12 featuring three top chefs and including a wine-tasting and kitchen demonstration. Price is £220 per person for two nights including dinners. Details: 01776 810471.

■ LEARN to drive an off-road four-wheel-drive vehicle at a weekend break during May at the Haycock Hotel at Wansford near Peterborough. Cost for the four-by-four week-

end break is £199 per person for dinner, bed and breakfast and tuition. Details: 01780 782223.

■ GUESTS staying in a deluxe room at the Hotel Byblos in St Tropez, France, will automatically be upgraded to a junior suite if booked through Leading Hotels of the World this month. Cost of a deluxe room starts at £153 per night. Details: 0800 181123.

■ WALK the Cotswold Way on an escorted tour and stay at two Pride of Britain Hotels, Calcot Manor at Tetbury and the Green Way near Cheltenham. Tours last four or five days and start at £530 per person, including accommodation and dinner and are organised through Heritage Touring. Details: 01305 266440.

■ THE Sol Melia hotel group has a special "Buy Yourself a City" weekend offer at 31 of its city hotels in Spain and Portugal for just over £30 per room per night. The offer, available until the end of the year, must include a Saturday night stay. Details: 0800 962720.

FERRIES

P&O EUROPEAN Ferries has rates of £9 per passenger and £15 per car on sailings from Portsmouth to Le Havre or Cherbourg. Visitors can spend up to 36 hours in France, valid until May 15. Details: 0990 080555.

■ STENA LINE has a special £66 five-day fare on Dover-Calais and Newhaven-Dieppe routes until May 22, valid for a car and up to nine people. A standard return costs £126 — but both must be booked and paid for by April 30. Details: 0990 707070.

■ SEA FRANCE has undercut Stena with a £49 fare for a car and nine passengers on Dover-Calais for travel by May 11. Fares for travel by May 22 rise to £66 for a car and five passengers, with additional passengers costing £2. Details: 0990 717171.

■ STENA has space on its two freight ships operating Harwich-Hook of Holland for cars towing caravans, or motorhomes. The £198 return is available from June to September. Details: 0990 707070.

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Are you a tipper or tight-fisted?

By TONY DAW

THE BRITISH abroad are enthusiastic tippers but confused about when and where to give extra and so tend to err on the mean side, according to a survey published today. The research by Gallup for Visa UK reveals that Britons are trying to throw off their reputation for being tight-fisted, but are uncertain about the rules of tipping in foreign countries and are happier to find a service charge on their bills.

"That uncertainty is reflected in the amount we tip abroad which is surprisingly modest and often less than 10 per cent," says Carmel Clarke of Visa. Eighty-five per cent of the 1,000 people questioned do, however, believe in tipping while on holiday and only 2 per cent say they have never given a tip when abroad.

Holidaymakers almost always tip the waiter or waitress in a restaurant; two out of three give gratuities to taxi drivers, hotel maids and porters; more than half even tip bar staff, but only a third pay anything extra to hairdressers abroad. Most insist, however, that they only tip if the service is good to excellent.

This British willingness to tip abroad contrasts with the approach at home where an increasing number of people complain about what Hilary Rubinstein, editor of the *Good Hotel Guide*, calls "the arbitrary, antiquated and discreditable practice of imposing a service charge or touting for tips".

The British reputation for meanness is partly upheld by the survey. While most other Europeans and Americans will give gratuities of between 10 and 15 per cent, 57 per cent questioned by Gallup said they would tip less than 10 per cent. One

in four said they would give between 11 and 15 per cent and only one in 10 would give more.

Half of the 16 to 24-year-olds interviewed were unclear about how much to tip on holiday, but far fewer mature tourists admitted to being uncertain. The research has helped to shape the information provided by Visa in this year's holiday money guide which the credit card company offers free to holidaymakers. The guide focuses on money customs, including tipping and haggling, in a dozen popular holiday destinations.

"Practices vary from country to country and it makes life easier for holidaymakers if they know what to expect," Ms Clarke says. "In the United States, for example, you should tip in every situation, whether someone is carrying your bags or hailing a taxi."

"In Thailand, the picture is the opposite and no one expects a tip. In Australia and Spain, the approach is similar to this country."

General advice from Visa on tipping is to carry a small amount of local currency with you so that you can reward the person who carries your luggage at the airport or hotel. Visa also advises holidaymakers to check their bills to see if a service charge has already been added so that they do not pay twice, and to seek advice about local tipping customs if they are unsure.

The Gallup survey also reveals that the traditionally reserved British are happy to haggle on holiday. Six out of ten said that they had haggled for clothes and souvenirs when shopping abroad and had found it "a challenge and fun". The rest, however, still find it "embarrassing".



CHRIS DUGGAN

USA	FRANCE	ITALY	SPAIN	TURKEY	THAILAND
Tip airport and hotel porters \$1 a bag; taxi drivers 15-20 per cent of the fare; hotel doormen \$2 on arrival. In restaurants, tip about the same amount as the tax charged (17 per cent).	Tip porters, guides, door-men, taxi drivers and hairdressers FF5-10. In cafés and restaurants, a 15 per cent charge is normally added but extra 10 per cent for good service is normal.	Tipping porters and taxi drivers is not necessary. In restaurants and hotels, a service charge is usually included but leave an additional tip of 10-15 per cent and at least 1,000 lire.	Tip porters up to 500 pesetas but tipping taxi drivers is not essential. In restaurants, tip 5-10 per cent for good service; in hotels, service is included.	Tip airport and hotel porters, theatre and cinema ushers a small amount. Taxi drivers do not expect a tip but you could round the fare up. In restaurants, tip 10 per cent of the bill.	Tipping is not the custom and even taxi drivers do not expect extra. Staff in some city restaurants do now welcome tips although a service charge is sometimes added. Tip the bellboys in top hotels.



Cottage holidays are back in fashion as families rediscover the joys of Britain

UK cottage holidays boom

By HARVEY ELLIOTT

MILLIONS of young families, raised on package holidays in the Mediterranean, are rediscovering traditional British self-catering breaks by the sea and in the countryside.

Bookings for cottages are booming as young couples, bored with Spain or Greece, are turning to the kind of holiday their grandparents enjoyed as children, but which they have never had.

A sharp improvement in the quality of properties, investment in attractions and the recent run of good summer weather have combined to convince record numbers of parents in their twenties that Britain is a holiday destination to rival the traditional foreign sunspots.

"There is a whole generation of people under the age of 30 who have never known anything but a cheap foreign package — and they are getting fed up with it," says Geoff Cowley, marketing director of Country Holidays, part of the Holiday Cottages Group.

"Lifestyles have changed in the past few decades and the huge investment that has been made in Britain has proved that Britain has attrac-

tions, too — and you don't have to fight through crowded airports to find them."

Judy Robson, holiday cottages manager for the National Trust, says that forward bookings were "extremely good" and that almost all their properties had been booked from May to September.

"There is no doubt people are looking to this country for their one-week holiday," she says. "The quality is so high now that it is attracting an enormous number of repeat bookings, too."

The English Tourist Board says cottages appeal to the independent holidaymaker. "Improved quality and value for money, coupled with child-friendly facilities mean that self-catering is being recognised as an attractive alternative to hotel accommodation," a spokesman says.

The average price of one of the 10,000 properties let by Country Holidays is about £300 a week for four people. This compares with about £250 per person for a Mediterranean package.

Holiday cottages are particu-

larly popular with young families because they can reach their destination easily, taking as much as they want with them, including toys.

A growing number of cottage owners are now letting their properties through companies specialising in British holidays, but there is still an acute shortage of quality property.

The countryside is also becoming popular with foreign visitors with bookings up more than 10 per cent on last year. This year the overall market is expected to grow by at least 3 per cent, partly because of the recent good weather, which has drawn record numbers to the seaside. Short breaks are increasingly popular, up 21 per cent.

Although most cottage breaks are still taken between Easter and October, holidays outside school holidays have shown consistent growth. Autumn has had the most spectacular growth rate. Bookings for November have risen by half in the past two years. The Lake District is still the most popular area for a cottage holiday overall, but Cornwall and the West Country dominate in summer.

British Airways plans New York 'second home'

By HARVEY ELLIOTT

BRITISH Airways is to spend more than \$100 million building a "second home" at New York's JFK airport. The go-ahead for the terminal was ordered by the BA board last week after secret internal reports convinced it that the controversial alliance with American Airlines will get the go-ahead despite mounting opposition on both sides of the Atlantic.

When it is completed in 1999, the terminal will be the most modern in America and, BA believes, will persuade millions of passengers to use the proposed hourly "shuttle" service to Britain, to be jointly operated by BA and AA.

"Our investment will put us eight years ahead of the competition at JFK, permitting passengers to depart and arrive tirelessly," says Bob Ayling, BA's chief executive. "It will feature expanded check-in areas, new lounges and state-of-the-art amenities designed to meet the demands of premium business travellers as well as leisure passengers."

However, the real emphasis will be on wooing executives. BA is anxious to boost the number of people prepared to spend more than ten times the

price of the cheapest Apex return fare for the comfort of travelling business class.

A Super Apex return flight can now be bought for as little as £219 compared with £344 for a fully flexible economy ticket, a business-class fare of £2,680, a first-class return fare of £4,746 and a seat on Concorde for £5,596 return. Market research has shown that business travellers want superior treatment to fellow leisure passengers.

The new terminal will have an "extended care zone" with new lounges for premium passengers and direct access to the departure gates, parking areas on the departures level and a revolutionary electronic baggage system.

The terminal should be completed soon after the proposed link between the two airlines has been finalised. All AA services to Britain will then be moved to the new building, together with many of the key connecting services from within the United States enabling passengers to fly to London through a single terminal.

British Airways operates more services to Britain from New York than any transatlantic carrier, with more than

2,100 seats from JFK to London each day in the summer peak and more than 2,600 seats from JFK to the UK generally. More than 700,000 passengers fly on BA each year on more than 4,200 departures from New York.

The airline is cashing in on the fact that it will be the only airline in New York to have its own terminal. All others have to share — as BA does at Heathrow's Terminals 4 and 1. The lack of a central terminal at Heathrow enabling BA to handle all its flights has long been a source of frustration among the airline's senior staff.

Now, they believe, the terminal at JFK will enable them to create a second "hub" across the Atlantic which will be more convenient than Heathrow and underline BA's position as a global airline.

One of the key developments is a new access road linking the terminal to the nearby expressway, a "shortcut" road across the airport and a new Manhattan rail link to provide better and faster connections between the city and the airport.

The original terminal was built in 1970 and was last refurbished in 1991.



An artist's impression of the \$100 million British Airways terminal at JFK airport



The Travel Business

HARVEY ELLIOTT

Flying in the face of our right to travel

Those involved in international travel constantly remind anyone who will listen that they belong to the world's fastest-growing — and arguably biggest — industry.

Each year millions more people want to indulge their wanderlust, seek fresh business opportunities or visit friends and relatives.

And those who provide them with the means argue that unless airports, airlines, hotels and car hire companies expand, the ever-increasing demands of their customers will not be met. Millions of people will be denied their aspirations — and rights — of free and unhindered travel, and prices will inevitably spiral because of constraints.

That, at least, was the perceived wisdom until last week.

But during an otherwise anodyne conference of aviation experts in Stockholm, some influential people questioned the idea of unending growth.

Karl-Heinz Neumeister, secretary-general of the Association of European Airlines, admitted that "the problem of aviation is our continued growth". And Bob Ayling, chief executive of British Airways, said that the industry now wished to find ways of reducing the impact on the environment.

These may seem small steps towards admitting the existence of the central problem facing the travel industry. Yet airlines and airports seem ready to accept that they must move away from what Tony Goldman, Britain's top aviation civil servant, called "predict and provide".

"Airlines must learn the hard lesson that growth is not a good story any longer," Mr Neumeister says. "Growth is counter-productive."

I have often argued that airports and air traffic control must expand if they are

to cope with increased demand. But there are limits to such growth.

The first time I began to understand the meaning of the phrase "limits to growth" was also in Stockholm — more than 25 years ago during the first world environmental conference in 1972.

The arguments then were much the same as they are today — population is expanding too fast, fossil fuels are running out, species of animals and plants are being wiped out, we are using too much water, tourists are swamping large parts of the Earth and noise is becoming intolerable.

Somehow the world has survived the last quarter of a century and air travel has expanded beyond the wildest dreams of the environmental pioneers who gathered in Stockholm all that time ago.

But now the force is with the environmental movement as never before. Suddenly unrepresentative groups, such as Swammy and his friends, are getting the headlines and the support of the people. Heathrow's proposed Terminal 5, however logical and economically necessary, is looking as likely to be built as John Major's Government is to be re-elected.

But at least in Stockholm last week those who really care about the travel industry seemed prepared to face up to the environmental problems posed by their business.

Perhaps those opponents who call for a cap on the expansion of airports and air travel generally will also begin facing up to some hard questions, too. Who will suffer from the curbs they demand? It will surely not be the business traveller who must fly whatever the price or whatever the difficulty.

The victims will be private individuals exercising their right to pleasure and leisure. Is this price worth paying?

Tour operators offer pre-election bargains

TOUR operators are attempting to cash in on pre-election boredom by persuading holidaymakers to flee the country in the run-up to polling day, Harvey Elliott writes.

The travel industry hopes to attract "stay-at-home" voters by offering cut-price holidays and by mounting an anti-election advertising and marketing campaign.

Travel agent A.T. Mays has "Election Buster" bargains from April 24, with 1,000 holidays reduced in price.

Kuoni is advertising "sound-bite-free zones far away from the electioneering".

Its "pre-election bargains" range from 11 nights self-catering in Cyprus for £199 per person to 16 nights along the Yangtze River in China for £2,424.

Meanwhile, Italy is experiencing a boom because of the fall in the lire. Bookings for the Riviera and Tony Blair's favourite holiday destination, Tuscany, are up by as much as 30 per cent on last year.

Just a little bit closer

THE OFFICIAL safety distance between passenger jets crossing the Atlantic has been halved — to save airlines at least £20 million a year, Harvey Elliott writes.

Aircraft will now be only 1,000ft apart vertically, instead of 2,000ft. Bob Thomson, manager of air traffic control for the Civil Aviation Authority, says: "With the large number of aircraft flying across the Atlantic it has not always been possible for airlines to operate at heights

that are most suitable for fuel economy. The introduction of the new separation limits means there will now be additional flight levels available. More aircraft will be able to fly for more of the time at the heights that allow maximum fuel economy."

About 70 per cent of jets flying across the Atlantic are equipped with new precision altimeters which are sufficiently accurate to enable them to use the reduced minimum separation limits.

Tourists set to invade Falklands

By TONY DAW

SO MANY British tourists want to visit the Falkland Islands, in the wake of the military task force that set sail 15 years ago this week, that travel companies are increasing the number of holidays to the colony.

The latest British invasion will be led by cruise ships, recalling the vital role liners such as the QE2 and Canberra played in the conflict.

P&O, owners of the Canberra, which is making her final voyage this summer, is doubling the number of cruises visiting Port Stanley, the Falklands' capital, next winter and doubling the size of the liner making the trip.

The 1,200-berth Royal Princess is taking over from the Pacific Princess, which carries only 600 passengers, and will make five sailings around Cape Horn, including stops in Port Stanley.

"The cruises have become so popular that they justify the increase in our programme," says Nigel Esdale, P&O Cruises marketing manager.

"Many of our passengers take the opportunity of a day on the islands to make an emotional trip to San Carlos Bay where most of the British forces landed."

More British tourists will be visiting the islands with two American cruise companies, Society Expeditions and Quark, on trips organised by Journey Latin America, based in Chiswick, west London.

Chris Parrott, the company's marketing director, says: "Most of our clients are attracted to the islands by their unspoilt beauty and wildlife which includes five different types of penguin, seals and rare birds."

visitors to protect wildlife and the environment.

For those more interested in the battles of 15 years ago, Holts Tours of Sandwich, Kent, arranges occasional trips which take in the main battlefields, including Goose Green, Bluff Cove and Tumbledown Mountain.

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RACING

Irish hope ruled out of National

By OUR RACING STAFF

TIME FOR A RUN, one of the leading hopes for the Martell Grand National at Aintree on Saturday, will miss the race. The Edward O'Grady-trained ten-year-old, the intended mount of Norman Williamson, has been heavily supported for the race in recent weeks but his owner, J.P. McManus, said yesterday: "I don't know exactly what the injury is, but I am told he has chipped a joint and is out of Aintree." Time For A Run had been quoted at

very fast ground for him not to run. Watering of the National course began yesterday. Ian Renton, the assistant clerk of the course, said yesterday: "On the Grand National course the going remains good, varying from the easy side of good to the quicker side of good in a few places. We started watering the Grand National course this morning with the intention of removing any fast ground. The forecast is for a bit of drizzle tonight."

Loran Wyer has picked up the attractive spare ride on General Wolfe. The 31-year-old has been chosen to partner the Tim Forster-trained gelding, whose regular partner, Richard Dunwoody, is committed to riding Smith's Band. Wyer, who will school General Wolfe at Forster's Shropshire yard today, said: "I won the Becher Chase on Kildimo but my National record is not great, although I got to the nineteenth on Joint Sovereignty one year."

General Wolfe disputed Grand National favouritism after winning on his reappearance at Haydock in February, only to be pushed out in the betting after a heavy defeat at Chepstow a fortnight later. Forster has high hopes that

last season's Scottish Grand National runner-up can emulate his previous Aintree winners, Well To Do (1972), Ben Nevis (1980) and Last Suspect (1985). "General Wolfe could not be better," he said. "Chepstow was the first poor race he has run and I think it may have come too quickly after his hard race at Haydock, which was his first for a long time."

Jamie Evans, three times champion jockey in Australia, will ride the outsider, Mugoni Beach, for Martin Pipe. However, Pipe's plans for his two other entries remain fluid. A stable spokeswoman said: "Jamie Evans rides Mugoni Beach but we haven't found a jockey for Evangelique."

Challenger Du Luc, who runs in the Martell Cup today, is doubtful for the Grand National. Another National entry in action this afternoon is Master Boston, who lines up for the John Hughes Trophy. David Bridgwater has paid the price for giving Escartefigue a poor tactical ride in the Sayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham and been replaced by Richard Dunwoody at Aintree today. Bridgwater will also miss out on riding other horses owned by Darren Mercer and trained by David Nicholson, who said yesterday: "Between us we have said that for the time being we will have a change and I shall use the best jockeys available for Mr Mercer's horses."

The Martell Cup Chase, the feature race on the opening day of the Grand National meeting, is a case in point. A strict reading of the formbook means Barton Bank, nine lengths second to Mr Mulligan in the Gold Cup, should have the beating of Challenger Du Luc and One Man (8lb worse off), who finished nine and 25 lengths behind at Cheltenham — yet it is only the last two fences. Challenger

With much less emphasis on stamina around this extended but still sharp three miles, One Man and Challenger Du Luc should be seen to better effect. Both travelled sweetly at Cheltenham before their stamina limitations were exposed — dramatically in the case of One Man, who looked a serious threat until between the last two fences. Challenger

Triumph Hurdle, headed by Circus Star, runner-up to Commanche Court. However, the Triumph is a tough race and I prefer the chances of those runners who bypassed Cheltenham, although they must show improved form. Summer Spell will have his supporters but Fasti can run a big race at long odds. The winner of his seven races on the flat, including a decent Goodwood handicap, he was beaten less than four lengths on his second start over hurdles by Green Green Desert and High in the Clouds, both of whom run in today's opening race. Although his stamina was stretched when winning over 2½ miles at Taunton 24 days ago, the runner-up recently won by 26 lengths.

The decision by connections of Escartefigue to replace David Bridgwater with Richard Dunwoody will encourage support in the Barton & Guestier Handicap Hurdle. He can gain compensation for defeat in the Sayers' Hurdle, while the likely last place in the Seagram Top Novices' Hurdle will suit the enigmatic Green Grete Desert.

□ Rugby league: Some nine months after Iestyn Harris, 20, was put on the transfer list for a world-record fee of £1.35 million by Warrington, the Wales and Great Britain back is expected to sign for Leeds Rhinos today. Harris is likely to make his debut for his new club in the home match against Wigan tomorrow.

□ Table tennis: Katy Parker, 12, will become the youngest player to compete for England after being added to the squad for the world championships in Manchester later this month. She is the daughter of Donald Parker, the chairman of England selectors, and Jill Parker (née Hamersley), the winner of two team captain, who was European champion on three occasions.

□ Skiing: Tom Brown, from Torquay, profiting from sliding down the course first, justified his place as top seed in the British children's team by winning the boys' super giant-slalom by a margin of 1.60sec at the British Land children's national championships in Tignes, France yesterday.

□ Boxing: Andy Holligan will defend his British lightweight title against Carl Wetherhead, another Merseysider, at Everton Park Sports Centre on May 15. On the same bill, Peter Culshaw, of Liverpool, will challenge Adey Lewis, of Bury, for the British flyweight crown.

Time For A Run, prominent in the betting for the Martell Grand National at Aintree on Saturday, will miss the race because of injury

The Frog Prince poised to have legs of rivals

As the rest of the nation wrestles with the thorny issues of the general election and jitters over the stock market, racing's cognate must tackle the annual price for giving Escartefigue a poor tactical ride in the Sayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham and been replaced by Richard Dunwoody at Aintree today. Bridgwater will also miss out on riding other horses owned by Darren Mercer and trained by David Nicholson, who said yesterday: "Between us we have said that for the time being we will have a change and I shall use the best jockeys available for Mr Mercer's horses."

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IN BRIEF

Australia's grip broken by Rhodes

A TYPICALLY inventive 83 not out from Jonty Rhodes helped South Africa to reach 245 for eight against Australia on a slow and low pitch in the third one-day cricket international at Newlands, Cape Town, yesterday.

South Africa were in deep trouble at 106 for five in the 29th over after Ian Healy, who took over from Mark Taylor as Australia's captain, won the toss and chose to field. Relief came through a partnership between Rhodes and Derek Crookes, his Natal team-mate, which was worth 70, and 18 runs were scored from Shane Warne's final over.

Mark Waugh split the wedding on his right hand in dropping a slip catch offered by Jacques Kallis and was expected to bat only if absolutely necessary.

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RICHARD EVANS

Nap: THE FROG PRINCE (3.45 Aintree)
Next best: Fasti (4.20 Aintree)

10-1 fourth favourite with Ladbrokes and William Hill. Williamson could now renew his Cheltenham Gold Cup-winning partnership with the topweight, Master Oats, whose participation is looking increasingly likely. Kim Bailey, his trainer, will walk the course this morning to decide whether to run the 11-year-old, in whose absence the weights would rise by 15lb. But at Worcester yesterday, Bailey said: "It's going to take

AINTREE

THUNDERER

2.00 Green Green Desert

2.35 Barton Bank

3.10 SQUIRE SILK (nap)

4.50 Orchestrals Suite

The Times Private Handicapper's top rating:

Our Newmarket Correspondent: 3.45 Romany Creek.

Carl Evans: 4.50 Orchestrals Suite.

GUIDE TO OUR IN-RACE RACEDCAR

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Forward runner, 21-22 year old, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34, 35-36, 37-38, 39-40, 41-42, 43-44, 45-46, 47-48, 49-50, 51-52, 53-54, 55-56, 57-58, 59-60, 61-62, 63-64, 65-66, 67-68, 69-70, 71-72, 73-74, 75-76, 77-78, 79-80, 81-82, 83-84, 85-86, 87-88, 89-90, 91-92, 93-94, 95-96, 97-98, 99-100, 101-102, 103-104, 105-106, 107-108, 109-110, 111-112, 113-114, 115-116, 117-118, 119-120, 121-122, 123-124, 125-126, 127-128, 129-130, 131-132, 133-134, 135-136, 137-138, 139-140, 141-142, 143-144, 145-146, 147-148, 149-150, 151-152, 153-154, 155-156, 157-158, 159-160, 161-162, 163-164, 165-166, 167-168, 169-170, 171-172, 173-174, 175-176, 177-178, 179-180, 181-182, 183-184, 185-186, 187-188, 189-190, 191-192, 193-194, 195-196, 197-198, 199-200, 201-202, 203-204, 205-206, 207-208, 209-210, 211-212, 213-214, 215-216, 217-218, 219-220, 221-222, 223-224, 225-226, 227-228, 229-230, 231-232, 233-234, 235-236, 237-238, 239-240, 241-242, 243-244, 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Alan Lee, cricket correspondent, on the hard-hitting 134th edition of Wisden

England brought to book for attitude problem

Victory in New Zealand, it seems, gained only a brief respite from censure for the England cricket team. Disapproval of their demeanour and deportment has already been voiced in high places since the winter tours ended and now the players are being taken to task by the most revered and influential of sporting publications.

In the new edition of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, published today, England are accused of "looking sullen as well as incompetent". The ire of Matthew Engel, the editor of the book, is also extended to the players' employers, with some strident condemnation of the now defunct Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB).

Unashamed immodesty of the guaranteed bestseller, to be the world's most famous sports book, the 134th *Wisden* is, if anything, more accessible and comprehensive than ever — and certainly, with the inclusion of all Test scorecards from England's winter tours, far more up to date.

It is also thoughtfully provocative, notably through Engel's editor's notes, where he concludes: "Amid the general gloom of cricketing expansionism, England is a spectacular and potentially catastrophic exception."

Engel goes on: "In 1996-97 the national team reached a point where even the good days were bad... at the 1996 World Cup, the England squad resembled a bad-tempered grandmother attending

a teenage rave; British delegations at European summits have sometimes behaved in similar fashion. Unable to comprehend what was happening — on the field or off it — the players just lingered, looking sullen as well as incompetent."

"They conveyed as bad an impression in Zimbabwe at the end of the year. And, though they appeared to have learned to display a little more grace under pressure by the time they reached New Zealand in January, that merely emphasised their earlier petulance."

There is direct criticism of Michael Atherton and David Lloyd, the captain and coach, who "were culpable in failing to understand the importance of their roles as public figures". But, in tones the good



Cover point: Wisden does not avoid issues

book, this "was hardly surprising. Until the end of 1996 they were paid by the TCCB, a body that found public relations so difficult that, for its last couple of years, it simply gave up on the whole business."

The failings of the national team, argues Engel, are "merely the superficial expression of a far deeper mess". In a couple of withering paragraphs, aimed at disturbing any complacent contemplation of the proceeds from the Ashes tour this summer, cricket is then compared wholly unfavourably with football in terms of broad appeal.

"Play in the Lord's Test was stopped by the roar of delight among the spectators when they heard that England had beaten Spain in the European championship quarter-final. The idea that the reverse might ever happen at Wembley is unthinkable."

The blunt fact is that cricket in the UK has become unattractive to the overwhelming majority of the

population. The game is widely perceived as elitist, exclusionist and dull."

The chairman of the new England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, is wise and worldly enough to appreciate this opinion, even if he does not wholly agree with it.

Indeed, in a page-long manifesto appropriate to this political week, MacLaurin echoes such fears. "There are some amber lights flashing over our game and we have to respond," he says.

"We're prepared to talk to the counties about issues that, in the past, might have been filed under 'too hard' — the amount of one-day cricket, uncovered wickets, two divisions, anything. Perhaps we will have a more radical agenda than people expect."

Many of us are counting on MacLaurin being more faithful to his promises than others issuing manifestos this week.

Another indicator of England's parlous position in the game is the absence of a single home-qualified player from Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year — only the fourth time this has occurred.

Sachin Tendulkar, the India captain, gains the honour along with Mushaq Ahmed and Saeed Anwar, of Pakistan. Sanath Jayasuriya, of Sri Lanka, and the West Indian Phil Simmons, who is at least recognised for his part in helping Leicestershire to win the Britannic Assurance county championship.

□ *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1997* (John Wisden, £26 hardback).

GOLF: OLAZABAL STRIDING CONFIDENTLY TOWARDS AUGUSTA

Illness puts Masters place in doubt for Ballesteros

FROM JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT
IN NEW ORLEANS

THE comeback of José María Olazábal, so far restricted to Europe and the Middle East, moves to the United States this morning when he competes in the Freeport McDermott Classic, in New Orleans.

As Olazábal, the 1994 Masters champion, prepared for only his fourth tournament since he returned to competitive golf, so the travels of Severiano Ballesteros, his countryman, continued. Ballesteros has withdrawn from this event and his participation in the Masters next week is in doubt.

He arrived in Louisiana on Monday looking grey and sounding nasal and miserable. He had a stinker of a cold and had been taking antibiotics for three days. When he got to the English Turn golf club yesterday morning to compete in the pro-am, Ballesteros felt so rotten he sought out a doctor.

Ballesteros "has classic cold and flu," Dr. Marshall, St. Amant said. "I have put him

on antibiotics. He needs to go to bed. He needs lots of water and he should be better within one week." Ballesteros, who will be 40 next Wednesday, said: "I have a high temperature and I don't feel very good. I would like to go home, but I don't make decisions as quickly as that. The most important thing is to be healthy. I will give it all the time I can. The year can only get better."

Olazábal, in contrast, is growing more confident with every day that passes. His feet



Olazábal: stronger

have got progressively less painful since his return to competitive play at Dubai in February after an 18-month lay-off. "The progress is slow but there is always improvement," Olazábal said. "I am able to play two weeks in a row, but I am not going to attempt more than that in the immediate future."

Olazábal finished twelfth in Dubai, a remarkable performance that included a round of 65. Two weeks later, he finished fourth in the Portuguese Open and then came victory in the Turespina Masters, in the Canary Islands, the week before last.

Even Olazábal was surprised at that. "The pictures you saw of me on TV were very unusual," he said. "I have never cried on a golf course before. They were tears of happiness."

English Turn golf club, designed by Jack Nicklaus, is laid out on the banks of the Mississippi, 15 miles from the centre of New Orleans. It has water on 17 holes and is as flat as a tabletop. It gets its name from the occasion when French troops ambushed Brit-

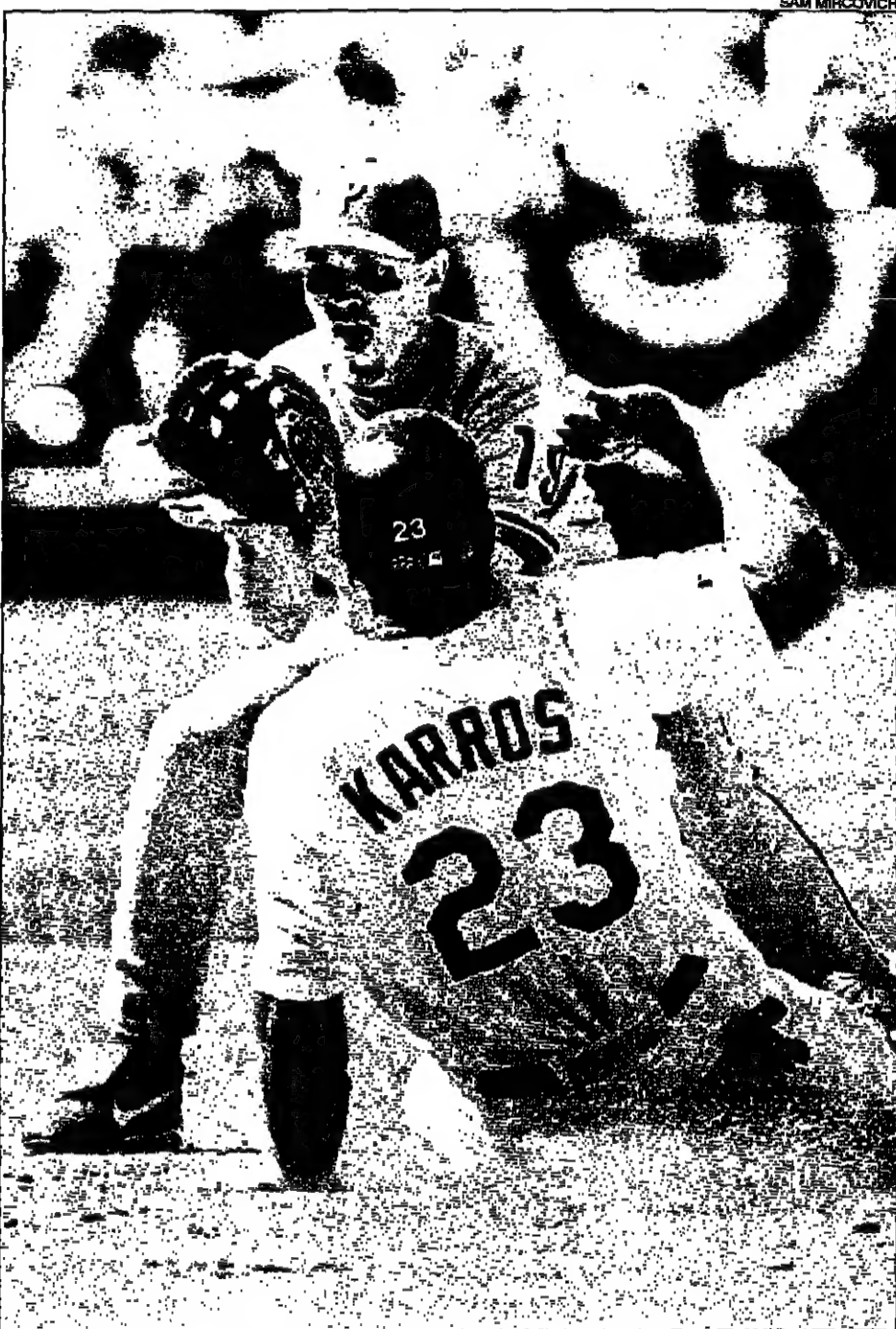
ish forces at a bend in the river.

English Turn should cause Olazábal, who finds walking on the flat relatively easy, little discomfort, but Augusta National golf club, which has hardly a level hole, is a different matter. There is a difference of 100 feet between the 10th tee and the 11th green, the highest and lowest points on the course.

Still, just to be there will be momentous for the Spaniard. At this time last year he was lying on a couch at home, worried that he might never walk again. He moved around by crawling from place to place. His spirits could scarcely have been lower.

"In any major championship you want to be there," Olazábal recalled. "The Masters, the US Open, the Open, whatever it is."

"You have earned the right to be there. It is tough to have to watch it on TV. I don't know what to expect next week, but I shall go to the clubhouse again and soak up the atmosphere. It will be very special next week to be at Augusta after last year."



Kevin Stocker, the Philadelphia Phillies shortstop, keeps his eye on the ball as the curtain rises on the new baseball season in Los Angeles. Eric Karros is out and the Dodgers shut out, 3-0 — failing to score on the opening day for the first time to 27 years.

Los Angeles. Eric Karros is out and the Dodgers shut out, 3-0 — failing to score on the opening day for the first time to 27 years.

Barnes offers Daly medicine

BRIAN BARNES has every sympathy for the predicament of John Daly. Barnes, a recovering alcoholic, now neither drinks nor smokes and is relishing the new lease of golfing life that the US Senior Tour has given him.

As he prepared to make his debut in The Tradition tournament, at Desert Mountain in Scottsdale, Arizona, today Barnes said: "John's done the right thing. The first thing an alcoholic must do is admit there's a problem and I think it's the first time John's really admitted that to himself."

Daly is undergoing treatment for his alcoholism at the Betty Ford Clinic in Palm Springs, California, after issuing a statement admitting to his problems. Barnes, who

Patricia Davies meets a man with some words of wisdom for a troubled golfer

has not touched a drop since January 22, 1993, said: "He's now got to go through the whole process of rehabilitation. If his doctor says it'll take six, eight or ten weeks or six months, he's got to do it."

"I haven't spoken to him about alcoholism because he didn't ask and it's a waste of time giving advice unless the alcoholic wants to hear about it, but I'll probably write to him and congratulate him. He's got a lot to offer the world of golf and people in general."

"It was great chatting to John at the Open at Lytham last year. He played either just

ahead of me or just behind me in each round but we were never paired together. I was joking with him on the putting green and I said if we were together in the final round, I'd get a large vodka bottle and fill it up with water and give it to him to have a swig when he got into trouble. But that would probably just have got him into more trouble."

Barnes emphasised that Daly must realise that he will never drink again. This from the man who, at one stage, would start the day with several large coffee cognacs and chase them down later

with numerous pints of beer and quantities of vodka and orange. It would make a normal mortal sick to think about it, but that was part of the problem. Barnes's capacity was unbelievable and he never had a hangover.

He was also an amiable drunk, with none of Daly's reported belligerence. "My wife will say that I was never impossible to live with," Barnes, who has been married to Hilary for nearly 30 years, said. "My fellow pros knew I liked a drink but they never realised I'd become an alcoholic."

Barnes, who ended up so depressed that he contemplated suicide, still gets the shivers when he thinks of one particular incident. It happened just after his stint recovering in hospital. He was driving home from the golf club in West Chillingham, Sussex, when a child of about



Barnes: advice

five cycled out in front of him. Barnes came within an inch — literally — of hitting the child. "He was white as a sheet. I was as white as sheet and if it had happened five weeks earlier that child was dead because my reactions would have been at least that inch slower. There's definitely somebody out there looking after me," Barnes said.

He also has a minder on the ground — Phil Ramm, a friend from home, who has given up his job to caddy for Barnes. And when the other professionals ask if life can be worth living with no drinking, no smoking and a wife living several thousand miles away, Barnes has no hesitation in saying, "Damn right it is". After all, he is securing his, and his family's, future.

CRICKET

Bangladesh rue luck of the Irish

THE folly of planning the quarter-final group matches of the ICC Trophy without the provision of a reserve day was exposed in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, when all four scheduled fixtures were abandoned (a Special Correspondent writes).

The rains came to the rescue of Ireland, who gained a draw against Bangladesh when their game at the new Royal Selangor Club was called off.

After dismissing the Irish for 129, Bangladesh were well set for an important win at 23 for no wicket when a heavy shower intervened.

Gordon Greenidge, the Bangladesh coach, joined his players in mopping up the wicket surrounds — work that Ireland thought illegal and Holland were prevented from doing on the other side of the city — and conditions were deemed fit for play right on the cut-off time for the minimum 20 overs.

Protests by Mike Hendrick, the Ireland coach, were ignored, but when Neil Doak skidded when fielding a shot from the second ball, and the third ended in a puddle, Hendrick's view prevailed and the umpires led the players off.

Aside from Ireland gaining a point they did not deserve, the real beneficiaries were Holland, who would almost certainly have been out of the tournament had Bangladesh won.

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Beardsley counts blessings as marathon's accidental hero



There will be many moments of magic in the Flora London Marathon next week, but it will be hard to beat the finish of the first London race in 1981.

There, the joint-winners, Dick Beardsley, from America's Midwest, and Inge Simonsen, from Norway, crossed the line hand in hand, in a gesture of sportsmanship that put their picture straight on to the front pages.

The two runners seemed to glide to the tape effortlessly in 2hr 11min 48sec, the fastest run seen in England at that time, and Beardsley was soon to show that he had plenty in hand. In the Boston marathon the following year, he came second in a legendary photo-finish with Alberto Salazar in 2hr 5min 54sec — still the third-fastest run by an American.

Beardsley was hailed as a true American hero. Blessed with an easy, outgoing personality, he was much in demand as an athlete and a speaker, and the young man who had everything reckoned himself truly lucky.

These days, 16 years on, he still considers himself lucky — lucky that he is not in prison, lucky that he is still alive and lucky that he can run a few steps, if only for 15 minutes at a time.

Last Friday, Beardsley, now 41, was up before a Minnesota court for sentence after pleading guilty to forgery. He faced a possible prison term for writing prescriptions on a doctor's pad for more than 1,600 controlled painkillers. He was given 240 hours community service and a \$1,000 fine.

Beardsley's marathon fall from grace resulted from a catalogue of accidents that started in 1989 while working on a tractor at home on his farm. "I got caught up in a rotating shaft and almost had my left leg torn off at the knee," he said. "I was really lucky — twice they were going to amputate." He may have been lucky to have lived, but he was left with a mangled leg, severe knee injuries, a broken wrist, cracked ribs and a punctured lung.

Two weeks after the accident, his leg became infected and he was given more surgery and heavy doses of painkillers. Incredibly, he dreamed of a comeback to running and did endless leg lifts as he lay on his hospital bed.

By 1992, he had built up his strength enough to return to his farmwork and



Beardsley, left, and Simonsen cross the line together in London in 1981

get back to his running. But it was while he was driving back from a race with his wife, Mary, and son, Andy, that Beardsley suffered the first of three more life-threatening accidents.

His car was rammed on the driver's side by a motorist who had gone through a stop sign. Beardsley's car was smashed off the road into a ravine, and while his wife and son escaped uninjured, he was back in hospital with spinal and shoulder injuries — and pumped full of more painkillers.

He came out unable to cope with the tough labour of farming and got a job as a farm reporter for a local radio station. Six months after his last

been written off, Beardsley, still trying to come back as an athlete, went for a run in the snow and was struck from behind by a hit-and-run driver.

He was back in hospital, this time for 16 days, with neck and back injuries. Three weeks later, at home, he became dizzy, passed out and fell down 15 stairs.

The pain did not stop, and neither did the accidents. Just a month later, Beardsley lost control of his car in a blizzard and it flipped over several times before landing upside down. He had to be cut free from the vehicle, and this time he suffered fractured vertebrae and head injuries.

After 19 operations, with rods and screws holding his back together, and with running out of the question, he grew ever more dependent on painkillers. When his father died of cancer last summer, Beardsley scoured the house for any painkillers left unused. The pressure on him grew worse as his son, Andy, so distressed by his grandfather's death, attempted suicide.

When his ransacked supply of painkillers dried up, Beardsley took to writing his own prescriptions. After three months of forgeries, he was exposed by a pharmacist in September and arrested.

He said he was relieved to get caught and lucky to be given help to fight his addiction. Beardsley's belief that, despite all his troubles, he is "lucky" even prompted him to write a song about himself, called "Lucky", while lying on a hospital bed.

"It seemed like every time I walked outside, something happened," he said.



In The Times on Monday: a 16-page colour guide to the Flora London Marathon

"But the song 'Lucky' is about how lucky I am to have had the life I've had, the friends I've had, to have God in my life. I think about the song every day."

Beardsley is a man who does not give up easily and even after all he has been through, the glowing memories he has of the marathon still threaten to flicker back to life. Two weeks ago, for the first time in 18 months, he did a little running. It was only two miles, and he says he is taking both his life and his running just 15 minutes at a time.

If he could defy all that has been thrown at him and drag his battered legs back to tackle the London Marathon, he could be sure of a great welcome.

There would be plenty who would be proud to line up alongside him, and there would be many more who would consider themselves lucky indeed to join hands at the finish with the remarkable marathon man, Dick Beardsley.

JOHN BRYANT

A new taste of the Orient

Nancy Lam
Channel 5, 8.00pm

It's time to meet the latest in the long line of wacky TV cooks. Nancy Lam is as oriental as her name suggests and her speciality is, as you may have guessed, oriental cuisine. But unless Delia Smith is the host, cookery programmes tend to be more about style than substance. Lam is billed as an original, yet almost all her trademarks have been inherited. She is a fat lady and the BBC has two of them. She is assisted by a meek husband whom she routinely chides, an echo of Fanny and Johnny Craddock. She talks to the cameraman in the manner of Keith Floyd and, like Gary Rhodes, she praises her own creations. It is, though, hard to remember a cook who is cheeky to the diners in her restaurant. If you remember Lam for her performance rather than her dishes, that is how she is projected.



The cook Nancy Lam (Channel 5, 8.00)

Mad About Machines: My Life with Dennis
Channel 4, 8.00pm

Dennis is not a person but for Malcolm Hemley he might just as well be. On Malcolm's 17th birthday, his father presented him with a Dennis motorised lawnmower. This 1925 model became not only a prized possession in itself but the start of a Dennis collection which now numbers 35. In case you think there is nothing to Malcolm's life except old lawnmowers, the film reveals that he is a devoted son. He nursed his late father through cancer and now lives with, and looks after, his 83-year-old mother. But when human needs have been met, it is off to the huge shed his Dorset garden which houses his cherished mowers. Sadly Malcolm's 1925 model is *hors de combat*, lacking an essential part. Perhaps there will be somebody watching who is able to supply it.

Horizon: Silent Children, New Language
BBC2, 9.30pm

The starting point of Judith Bunting's densely argued film is a group of deaf children in Nicaragua who created their own sign language. The achievement was noteworthy in itself but of even greater interest in reopening the debate about whether language is a biological instinct or copied from the surrounding world. There are formidable

authorities on both sides of the fence. Back in the 1950s the American linguist Noam Chomsky was arguing that children created language from nothing. He repeats this claim here. The film follows the work of a Nicaraguan of another linguist from the United States, Judy Kegl, as she tests and develops Chomsky's argument. It may come as no surprise to discover that the matter is far from simple and while Kegl has delved further into it than most she still cannot pronounce the final word.

Northern Exposure
Channel 4, 10.35pm

After a short break we are back among the citizens of the dead end town of Cicely, Alaska. The point about *Northern Exposure*, apart from the quirky humour made more effective for being delivered in such a dead-end town, is that the equilibrium is never disturbed. Or if it is, it is soon restored. We have two examples tonight. Maurice (Barry Corbin), the timber tycoon, wants to pass the business on to his young cousin, also called Maurice. It is giving nothing away to reveal that Maurice junior proves a huge disappointment. The potential for upheaval is the departure of Roy Morrow's Dr Joel to Russia. Moreover he is taking Maggie (Janine Turner) with him. But it is a Russian plane they choose and on top of language difficulties take-off is more than a little delayed. Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

The Jamesons' Farewell Night
Radio 2, 10.30pm

Love him or hate him, Derek Jameson has certainly made his mark on Radio 2. There has been nobody quite like him, and I don't see anyone on the horizon who can be expected to say the kind of things he says, at least not in the way he says them. During the past five years, his wife Ellen has kept him company at the Radio 2 microphone. Tonight the Jamesons' fond farewell night arrives. Bidding the Jamesons a fond farewell tonight are some of the entertainers and programme makers who have appeared on their show. They include Jim Davidson, Barry (Dame Edna) Humphries, Ken Bruce, Su Pollard and the Wilkites, Desmond and Esther.

RADIO 1

7.00am Mark Radcliffe, includes Newsbeat 8.00am Dave Pearce 12.00pm John Peel, includes at 12.30pm Newsbeat 2.00pm Nick Campbell 4.00pm Kevin Greening 8.15pm Newsbeat 8.30pm Evening Session with Steve Lamacq 8.30pm John Peel 10.30pm Mary Anne Hobbs 1.00am Dave Pearce 4.00am Clive Warren

RADIO 2

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30am Wake Up to Wogan 9.30am Alex Lester 11.30am Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Thwaiter 3.00pm Peter Dinkley 7.00pm The News Hour 7.30pm David Allen 8.00pm Paul Jones 10.00pm Dr Rock Meets Jerry Lee Lewis (3/3) 10.30pm The Jamesons' Farewell Night. See Choice 12.00am Charles Nove 3.00am Alex Lester

RADIO 5 LIVE

5.00am Morning Reports 6.00am The Breakfast Programme 9.00am The Magazine 12.00pm Midday with Mark 2.00pm Russico on Five 4.00pm John Inverdale Newsnight 7.00pm News Extra 7.30pm On the Line 10.00pm Inside Sport 10.00pm Sportsman's Special with Alan Byrd 8.30pm Sportsman's Special with Adam Goldberg 10.00pm Brian Hayes's Backlist Night. Includes 11.00pm News Extra 11.15pm Financial World Tonight 12.00am After Hours — Early Call with Vincent Hayes 2.00am Up All Night with Flood Sharp

TALK RADIO

5.00am Chris Ashley and Sandy Warr 7.00pm Paul Ross 9.00pm Scott Chisholm 12.00pm Louise Kelly 2.00pm Tony Boyd 4.00pm Peter Dinkley 7.00pm Dee's Sportszone 10.00pm James White 1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Andrew MacGregor, includes Heinrich (Concerto in F, Serenade de Morburg); French (Symphony in D minor); Wagner (O Du Mein Heider Abendstern, Tannhauser); Bach (Brandenburg Concerto No 5 in D); Talle (Spem in Allum); Stanford (Dance Concerto in A minor) 9.00am Morning Concerto with Penny Gore, includes Paganini La Tura Concerto; Les Indes de Perou; Haydn (Piano Trio in B flat); Ravel (Schéhérazade); Rimsky-Korsakov (Piano Concerto) 10.00am English Chamber, with Stephanie Hughes, includes Schubert, in Susana (Overture, The Magic Flute); Beethoven (Variations on El Niño de Medina or Waldchen); Villa-Lobos (Bachiana Brasileira No 4); Kabalevsky (Cello Concerto); Glazunov (Symphony No 1 in B flat) 12.00pm Composer of the Week: Amy Beach, with Chris Whelan, includes Beach (Ballad, Op 6, Three Pieces, Op 4; Flute Quintet, Op 80, Theme and Variations) 1.00pm Opera Matinee: Hamlet, See Choice. With Simon Keenlyside, baritone, Natalie Dessay, soprano, Geneva Grand Theatre Chorus, Suisse Romande Orchestra under Louis Langrée 4.35pm Samuel Scheidt. A profile of the composer whose life centred around Halle John Scott, organ, Scheidt (Vater Unser, Bergamasca, Toccata in D) 5.00pm Musical Milestone. Sarah Walker visits Clarke Hall in Wakefield where she is taken on a musical tour of the house as it may have been in the 17th century 5.15pm Tunes with Brian Morton, includes Little (Cascades Obstiné); Beethoven (Variations on God Save the King, WoO 78); Brahms (Ich Rhapsoquie) 7.30pm Sounding the Century: Rachmaninov, Live from the Guldbell in Southampton. The Soumourn

Opera Matinee: Hamlet
Radio 3, 1.00pm

Prompted by this transmission of Ambrose Thomas's opera, recorded last September at the Grand Theatre in Geneva, I did some research into a work I did not know existed. Perhaps its most dramatic departure from Shakespeare's text is that it ends not with the prince's death, but with him on the Danish throne. I would have expected Hamlet to be sung by a tenor. Thomas gave the role to a baritone, and Humphrey Searle followed his example in his 1968 opera. Both he and Thomas gave the tenor role to Laertes. For the record, there have been six *Hamlet* operas, the first being by Mercadante in 1832. In the title role tonight is Simon Keenlyside, with the soprano Natalie Dessay as Ophelia. Peter Waymark

WORLD SERVICE

All times in BST. News on the hour. 5.30am Europe Today (11/12) 7.30am The World Today 8.15am On the Shelf 8.15am Pausa for Thought 9.15am Concert Hall 10.15am Farming World 10.30am BBC English 10.45am Sports Roundup 11.30am One Planet 12.30pm Sports International 1.05pm Business Report 1.15pm Britain Today 2.05pm Outlook 3.30pm Megarise 4.05pm Sports Roundup 4.15pm Performance 4.30pm Everyman 5.30pm Business Report 5.45pm Britain Today 6.15pm World Today 6.30pm From Our Own Correspondent 7.20pm The World & On Outlook 8.30pm Multitask X-Press 10.05pm Business 10.15pm Britain Today 10.30pm On Screen 11.30pm World Today 11.45pm Sports Roundup 12.01am Outlook 12.30pm Multitask 1.30pm From Our Own Correspondent 1.45pm Britain Today 2.30pm Omnibus 3.30pm Meridian Books 4.05pm Business 4.15pm Sport

CLASSIC FM

4.00am Mark Radcliffe 7.00am M&M 8.00am Radio 3 Classic Classics 10.00am Henry Kelly 1.00pm Lunchtime Concert, Brahms (Violin Concerto in D major Op 77) 3.00pm Nick Salk 7.00pm Classic Newsnight with John Brunning 7.30pm Sonata. Beethoven (Piano Sonata No 17 in D minor Op 31 No 2) 8.00pm Classic FM Evening Concert, Brahms (Piano Concerto in D minor); Liszt (Liebestraße Waltzes, selection); Symphony No 2 in D) 10.00pm Michael Mappin, includes 11.30pm Nocturne 2.00pm Lunchtime Concert (1)

VIRGIN RADIO

6.00am Russ 'n' Jono's Breakfast Experience 10.00am Graham Dine 1.00pm Jeremy Clark 4.00pm Nicky Home 7.00pm Paul Coyte (Rin) Robin Banks (AM) 10.00pm Mark Forrester 2.00pm Randal Lee Ross

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 47

LAMPREY

(a) Some fish resembling the lamprey. According to R. Holme, the lamprey at a certain stage of growth. From the French *lamprellon*. Isaac Walton, *The Compleat Angler*, 1653: "Fish, whose shape and nature are much like the Eel, namely the Lamprell, the Lamprey, and the Lamperne."

MELOPEPON

(a) A kind of melon. From the Greek word for an apple + a kind of gourd. Their Maccocks are a sort of Melopepones, or lesser sort of Pomplon.

MYGALE

(c) The shrew-mouse. Also the bird-spider, a genus of large, hairy spiders of America. From the Greek *mugale*. The sacred animal of Buto is said to have been the mygale or shrew-mouse.

LOOBLILY

(a) Looblylike, awkward, clumsy, inebriety. From the Teutonic words *lob* and *lubber* a loud. "It's enough to put any young lady in her pouts, to force her to marry a great loobly Yorkshire tyke."

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

(after 1 Nxd7) 1... Bxg2 and White loses, as if 2 Rg1 Bb4+ and the white queen goes.

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SNOOKER

Hendry plans a work-to-rule

By PHIL YATES

STEPHEN HENDRY, coolness personified when the heat is on, maintained his challenge for the British Open title by reaching the quarter-finals with a dramatic 5-4 victory over Paul McPhillips at Plymouth yesterday.

Hendry, successful in nine of the ten final-frame finishes in which he has been involved this season, constructed a green-to-black clearance to secure victory, despite an awkward placement of the colours. "Paul outplayed me for lengthy periods of the match and probably deserved to win, but I was proud of that clearance," Hendry, who calmly rolled the black across the top cushion into a corner pocket, said.

McPhillips, of Glasgow, took advantage of Hendry's sluggish start to lead 2-0, but the world champion recovered to lead 4-2. McPhillips responded positively with a run

of 126 in the seventh frame before adding the eighth in farcical circumstances.

Leading 66-39, McPhillips failed to lay a snooker on the yellow behind the brown and left a free ball. Hendry then suffered a brainstom. He potted the green, erroneously believing he could subsequently pot a colour of his choice before concentrating his attention on the yellow.

In fact, Hendry should have attempted to pot the yellow immediately after the free ball, so when he sank the green a second time, the referee, Eirian Williams, called a foul shot. At first shocked, the realisation of his mistake then spread across the face of an embarrassed Hendry.

McPhillips duly cleared yellow to blue and, holding a 43-22 advantage in the ninth frame, would have left Hendry requiring snookers had he not narrowly failed to

double the green to a middle pocket.

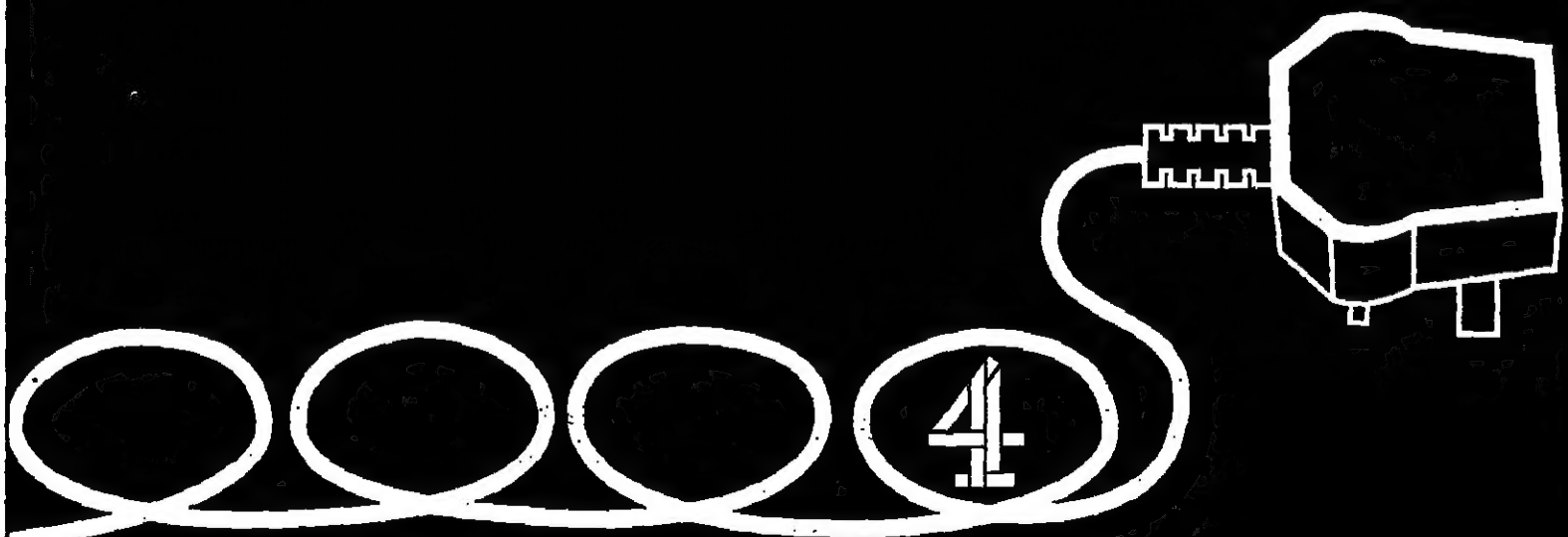
"It would have been a big blow to lose," Hendry, who is attempting to capture his sixth title of the season, said. "I'm going back to the practice table and I'll certainly take another look at the rulebook."

Hendry, winner of the tournament in 1988 and 1991, goes forward to meet Dave Harold, the No 11 seed, who was also fully extended before edging past Paul Sweeney, of Bexleyheath, 5-4.

Sweeney, the world No 201, fought back from 3-2 down to lead 4-3 with breaks of 71 and 64 and was on the threshold of success when he initiated the scoring in the eighth by compiling a run of 54. Harold eventually produced a 31 clearance, including an excellent closing black, before prevailing in a tense decider.

Results, page 48

Mad About Machines: Tonight 8.00



RADIO 4

5.55am Shipping Forecast (LW) 6.00am News Briefing 6.10am Farming Today 6.25pm Prayer for the Day 6.30pm Today, includes Thought for the Day 8.40am Racing: Pige and Giant Monarchs (4/5) 9.00am News 9.05am The Moral Maze. A discussion series chaired by Michael Buerk. With guests David Cook, Janet Daley, Michael Mansfield, QC, and Dr David Starkey 10.00am News: One Bright Child (FM), by Patricia Cumper. With Ben Thomas and Dona Croll (3/5) 10.00am Daily Service (LW) 10.15pm On This Day (LW) 10.30pm Women's Hour, with Wendy Austin 11.30pm From Our Own Correspondent. Reports from BBC correspondents from around the world 12.00pm News: You and Yours. Consumer news and current affairs with Mark Whittaker 12.25pm Foul Play. The last in the series of the murder mystery panel game. With Simon Brett and the writers Gavin Lyall and Anthony Price 12.55pm Weather 1.00pm The World at One, with Nick Clarke 1.40pm The Archers (1) 1.55pm Shipping Forecast 2.00pm News: Thursday Afternoon Play: Second Chance, by Sue Rodwell. An apparently ideal couple's lives are turned upside down when their baby son disappears from outside a supermarket. With Penny Layden and Richard Derrington 3.00pm News: The Afternoon Shift, with Russell Davies and guests 4.00pm News 4.05pm Kaleidoscope. Lynn Walker talks to the composer James Macmillan and reviews *Wilde*, a stage version of Charlotte Brontë's story. Plus a review of recordings of music by two Jewish composers who were imprisoned in the wartime transit camp at Terezin

4.45pm Short Story: The Surprise, by Julia Stoneham. Read by Anthony Bate 5.00pm News: With Charles Lee-Potter and Chris Lowe 5.50pm Shipping Forecast 5.55pm Weather 6.00pm Six O'Clock News 6.30pm Harry Hill's Fruit Corner. A series by the offbeat comedian. With Ben Kwouk, Edna Dore, Al Murray and Martin Hyde (3/5) 7.00pm News 7.05pm The Archers 7.20pm In Paradise. Noah Richter visits Japan (3/4) 8.00pm Analysis. The first in a new series of the programme which examines the thinking behind public policy and changes in society and the world. Peter Keiller chairs a discussion on the British economy 8.45pm Death in Silence. The first of three takes by a degree, work experience and no job (1/2) 9.00pm Does He Talk Sugar? The programme made for, and by, people with disabilities. Presented by Frederick Dobbs 9.30pm Kaleidoscope (1) 9.50pm Weather 10.00pm The World Tonight, with Isabel Hilton 10.45pm Book at Bedtime: The Sorcerer's Apprentice, by Frank O'Connor. Part one of two, read by Barbara Brenner 11.00pm Thirty Minute Theatre: Sex, Spies and Lovers. Based by Tracy Spottiswoode. Walker has become an independent republic, and the English aren't taking any chances (1) 11.30pm Utopia and Other Destinies. Sir Kenneth Calman explains his idea of Utopia (3/5) (1) 12.00pm News 12.05pm The Late Book: The Wasp Factory, by Ian Banks. Read by Joseph Macfarlane (3/10) 12.45pm Shipping Forecast 1.00am As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1. FM 97.5-99.2. RADIO 2. FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3. FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4. FM 82.4-84.6. LW 198. MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE. MW 693, 908. WORLD SERVICE. MW 648; LW 198 (12.45-5.55am). CLASSIC FM. FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO. FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO. MW 1053, 1069. Television and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamara.

Mucking about, mucking in and, er, muck

Angus Deayton's *Before They Were Famous*, shown on Easter Monday, has had a devastating effect on normal viewing. Once you have seen a teenage Clint Eastwood in a milk commercial, or a shoulishly grinning Jeremy Irons in striped pants on *Playaway*, every new face in a minor presenting job now looks like a future celebrity just gamely carving out embarrassment for his old age. Take Paul Hawkins, the starting co-presenter of Channel 5's *Great Garden Game*, which kicked off last night. Coiffed white hair, cherubic face, camp accent, palpable unease — this show is his stepping stone, surely. It is the bad dream that will one day come back to haunt him.

Meanwhile, it is a bad dream for the rest of us. The answer is to sit bolt upright and yell "Aaaaagh!" while baring the air with your arms. No, no, I'm exaggerating. But cheap, banal, pointless —

that's the territory. Last night, two three-person teams of anonymous pasty-legged simpletons (a red team and a blue team) competed to dig up grass paths at Bowdoin House, and relay them with gravel. And yes, that was it. Half an hour of cheap back-breaking labour dressed up as entertainment, with no earthly means of judging the rival efforts at the end, and no whiff of a decent prize. Whatever persuaded the dolts to take part? Already in Hell they are ordering *The Great Garden Game*, partly because it's given them ideas for sports day, but mainly because it's ideal for the terminal dejection of the damned.

Meanwhile, on ITV, young Paul's future prospects notwithstanding, the Angus Deayton principle was turned on its head. It's much more alarming to see the questionable role-choices of people after they were famous than before. Neil Morrissey (Tony in

Men Behaving Badly) starred in the two-hour hokum-fest *The Vanishing Man*, and to be honest, one's nervousness on behalf of a faltering career trajectory swept most other feelings aside. Is an invisible-man part really right for you, Neil? Do you have a firm hand on the controls? *The Vanishing Man* began with Morrissey flying a small aircraft through a thunderstorm, with a crate of plutonium leaking ominously in the hold. And as a symbol, well, it was hardly reassuring.

But to be fair, the second hour of this "comedy-thriller" somehow redeemed the first; personally, I was by then too exhausted to raise any more objections, and in any case felt safely cocooned in the telly equivalent of flavoured custard. Like drowning, *The Vanishing Man* was pleasant once you ceased to struggle. Nick Cameron (Mor-

REVIEW



Lynne Truss

rissey) had been a volunteer simpleton in a far-fetched research experiment, and now turned invisible when naked and wet. Thus he was well-placed to get revenge without anybody noticing. The special effects were great, of course. Morrissey was perfectly good, too. Let's just hope the kiddies were allowed to stay up late (it's the holidays, after all). With its obvious affinity to such

cult 1960s series as *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, the script of *The Vanishing Man* declared itself to be the work of Anthony Horowitz of *Crime Traveller* fame, a chap who has hijacked those enjoyable, escapist shows quite adroitly. The flaw in his homage, however, is the lack of archness — that flippancy of *The Avengers*, which undermined the silliness, and reassured adults they weren't wasting their time on kids' stuff. As a motiveless baddie, however, Barbara Flynn struck the perfect dastardly note last night, especially when waving an invisible gun (nice touch).

But what really hurt about *The Vanishing Man* was the thin vein of jokes — when the situation had such endless potential for wit and surprise. On the soundtrack, we got *I Ain't Got No Body*, but otherwise the best moment was when an unseen Nick chatted to his new girlfriend, and then sud-

denly appeared, from off-screen, fully clothed. It tricked the viewer, and it was clever.

Elsewhere, *Army of Innocents* (BBC1) continued the theme of exploited labour, while so did *Modern Times Dirty Work* (BBC2). *Army of Innocents* was the much-trailed history of National Service, which started off rather blandly with celebrities telling nightmare tales of basic training — John Peel, Michael Aspel, the late Willie Rushton — but then evoked more gloomy memories of Korea, where 200 conscripts died in combat, and others were taken prisoner by the Chinese. Such wild divergence of experience made for a strange programme. Hard to enjoy John Peel's reminiscences of office skiving, for instance, when another poor chap was recollecting the day he shot a peasant.

Finally, *Dirty Work* was another struggle to fit ill-matching pieces together. While the actress Sue Johnston intoned solemn "verse" in voice-over ("Our debts never stop accumulating"), Lucy Sandys-Winsch's beautifully photographed film introduced us to cleaners of various sorts — a daily, a lav lady, a night-time street sweeper, a gay couple with feather dusters — none of whom had cleaning, which was surprising but obvious at the same time.

In the fight between words and images, it's unusual for the commentary to grab so much attention, so it was a shame the words didn't always add much. But how clever to describe the street-sweeper's glass-sided vehicle as a "bathysphere" in the opening minutes. As the sweeper steered his craft along Newcastle's city precincts, catching strange nocturnal street-life in his lights, the image was absolutely perfect, and the best thing of the night.

BBC1

- 6.00am Business Breakfast (65319)
- 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (7) (90777)
- 8.00am Breakfast News Extra (7) (8351087)
- 8.20am Style Challenge (3872932)
- 9.45am Killy (2400680)
- 10.30am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (42067)
- 11.00am News (7) Regional News and weather (4950715)
- 11.05am The Really Useful Show (5493406)
- 11.35am Change That (817680)
- 12.00am News (7) Regional News and weather (4627883)
- 12.05pm Call My Bluff Panel game, hosted by Bob Holby (2579512)
- 12.35pm Good Living (9000883)
- 1.00pm News (7) and weather (6228883)
- 1.35pm Regional News (5085508)
- 1.45pm The Weather Show (3613574)
- 1.50pm Neighbours (22074870)
- 2.10pm Quincy Quincy comes to the aid of an old Congressman friend accused of murder (7964390)
- 3.00pm As Time Goes By (7) (5749)
- 3.30pm Playdays (6315593) 3.50pm Postman Pat (6453959) 4.00pm Pingu (9300715) 4.10pm Bananas (8545319) 4.15pm Rugsrats (8480574) 4.30pm The Mask (7737883) 5.00pm Newsround. Current affairs for younger viewers (7) (5488932)
- 5.10pm No Sweat New classroom drama for children. Teenager Jimmy moves with his family to Brighton (9132113)
- 5.35pm Neighbours (7) (7) (800203)
- 5.50pm News (7) and weather (70)
- 6.30pm Regional News (22)
- 7.00pm Watchdog Consumer Issues, presented by Anne Robinson and Alice Beer (5629)
- 7.30pm EastEnders. Tiffany, Grant and Tony attend the clinic for bloodstains that will identify baby Courtney's father. Sarah struggles to cope with the aftermath of recent events. Tony resolves to go home (7) (56)
- 8.00pm Animal Hospital. Roll Harris presents an update on the progress of past patients, including Holly the growing puppy and Jasper, a cat run over by a car (1848)
- 8.30pm A Perfect State. Malcolm takes on the daunting task of maintaining law and order in Flatby when he becomes the new Chief of Police (3883)
- 9.00pm News (7) and weather (9777)
- 9.00pm Dame Edna's Work Experience. The housewife megastar meets the little people of Britain, at a baked-bean factory in Wigan, Greater Manchester (7) (104951)
- 10.00pm Question Time. In the first of the hustings programmes, David Dimbleby is joined by, among others, the MPs Alex Salmond and David Lloyd (7) (829116)
- 11.00pm The Mrs. Merton Show With Joanne Lumley and Martin Clunes (7) (972884)
- 12.00am That's Carry On (1978) Kenneth Williams and Barbara Windsor reminisce about the series, with appearances from Carry On regulars Charles Hawtrey, Sid James, Hattie Jacques, Bernard Bresslaw, John Sims, Jim Dale and others (420365)
- 1.45pm Weather (5519588)

VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusCode
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BBC2

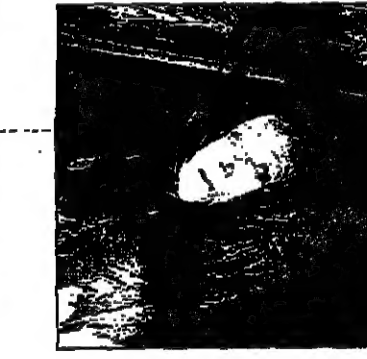
- 6.00am Open University: Is Seeing Believing? (2657593) 6.25pm Organellas and Origins (2676628) 6.50pm Enzymes (7077965) 7.15pm See Hear Breakfast News (8451406) 7.30pm Secret Life of Toys (2592414) 7.45pm The Racoon (4530116) 8.10pm Wacky Races (2423930) 8.30pm Blue Peter (3547032) 9.00pm Act-A-Dance (9824721) 9.30pm Sweet Valley High (7458661) 9.55pm Furrybones (2529664) 10.10pm Teletubbies (1720680) 10.30pm Babel (3052303) 11.00pm Young Indiana Jones Chronicles (8425113) 11.45pm Young Indiana Jones Chronicles (7127609)
- 12.30pm Working Lunch (51203) 1.00pm Secret Life of Toys (5139267) 1.15pm A-Z of Food (2227680) 1.25pm Ales Smith and Jones (2783864) 2.15pm Racing from Alton and Dubai (2486224) 4.55pm Esther (9111651) 5.30pm Today's the Day (99)
- 6.00pm Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (7) (685828)
- 6.45pm Quantum Leap (7) (893970)
- 7.30pm Politicians on Parade. The eight MPs learn about the varied responsibilities and pressures faced by the Armed Forces as they go out on deployment with the military (22) (48) Followed by Video Nation Election Shows
- 8.00pm Ken Hoo's Hot Work. Ken cooks for hungry firefighters in a hot and humid environment. Ken and his wife act out Timothy West and Prunella Scales. Back home in California he meets novelist Amy Tan, and demonstrates how to use the wok on a barbecue (7) (7) WALES: 8.00pm Deadness of Dad (2390)
- 8.30pm Top Gear. Michael Newman reports on the new East Africa; and Steve Berry takes part in the 60th annual Espy-to-Brighton motorcycle rally (7) (1425)
- 9.00pm Snooker: The Crucible — 21 Years in the Frame. David Vine presents a series of thrilling events at the spiritual home of world snooker in Sheffield, beginning with a look back in the 1970s and early 1980s (1/3) (7) (3767)



Inventive deaf children (9.30pm)

HTV

- 6.00am GMTV (8958628)
- 9.25pm Chain Letters (3890951)
- 9.55pm Regional News (7) (2919338)
- 10.00pm The Time, the Place (72893)
- 10.30pm This Morning (7) (6137999)
- 12.20pm Regional News (7) (463067)
- 12.30pm News (7) (908680)
- 12.55pm Shortland Street (901199) 1.25pm Home and Away (7) (6447574) 1.50pm Afternoon Live (1483124) 2.20pm Vanessa (7955309) 2.50pm Afternoon Live (6279970)
- 3.20pm News (7) (7921970) 3.25pm Regional News (7) (7920241)
- 3.30pm The Riddlers (7) (6467951) 3.40pm Wizard (8025406) 3.50pm Rupert (7) (6311777) 4.15pm Mike and Angelo (7) (6498222) 4.40pm Sweet (8542222)
- 5.10pm A Country Practice (1853951)
- 5.40pm News (7) and weather (97339)
- 6.00pm Home and Away (7) (827406)
- 6.25pm HTV Weather (736715)
- 6.30pm HTV News (7) (90)
- 7.00pm Emmeline. Vic discovers the truth about Tony's night out with Helen (7) (3338)
- 7.30pm 3-D. Julia Somerville asks why police chiefs seem to turn a blind eye to some crooks to capture others (7) (74)
- 8.00pm The Bill: A Hard Rain. Boulton and Croft discover that rivalry between drug dealers has tragic consequences for one of their more valuable customers (7) (6118)
- 8.30pm Police, Camera Action. Alistair Stewart narrates a high-speed race against time to transport a liver for a life-saving operation across 29 miles of the capital's busiest streets (7) (7) (8951)



Sylvia Syms in a watery grave (9.00)

- 9.00pm PD James: Original Sin (3/3) Di Denial. Aron comes up with an important lead into the gruesome murders. With Roy Marsden and Sylvia Syms (7) (4845)
- 10.00pm News (7) and weather (29118)
- 10.30pm Regional News (7) (546203)
- 10.40pm Crimewatch Special (900818)
- 11.10pm Gregory's Girl (1981) with John Gordon-Sinclair, Des Haggum and Clara Grogan. A witty romantic drama capturing the trials and tribulations of growing up in urban Scotland, centering on the relationship between a young man who is dropped from school football team and his replacement — a cunning girl. Directed by Bill Forsyth (181222)
- 12.35am In Bed with McDiarmid (3543446)
- 1.00pm Funnies Business (4076520)
- 1.40pm Cyber cafe (673238)
- 2.10pm Stand and Deliver (7) (5365094)
- 3.05pm 3-D (7) (7) (7584158)
- 3.35pm The Good Sex Guide. Late (7) (2003758)
- 4.30pm The Time, the Place (7) (20988)
- 5.00pm Garden Calendar (7) (99520)
- 5.30pm News (82655)

CENTRAL

- As HTV West except:
- 12.55pm-1.25pm A Country Practice (901199)
- 5.10-5.40pm Shortland Street (1853951)
- 6.25pm Central News (835425)
- 10.40pm Crime Patrol (845512)
- 11.40pm I Don't Like That (589048)
- 12.40pm Bagdad Cafe (6628902)
- 1.40pm Ed's Night Party (3309457)
- 2.05pm Club Nation (5368181)
- 3.00pm Access All Areas (25487)
- 3.30pm Stand and Deliver (2004487)
- 4.25pm Central Jobfinder '97 (4390278)
- 5.20pm Asian Eye (2638891)

WESTCOUNTRY

- As HTV West except:
- 12.55pm Home and Away (2308222)
- 1.20-1.50pm Emmeline (70070222)
- 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (1853951)
- 6.00-7.00pm Westcountry Live (83048)
- 10.40pm Film: Conan the Destroyer (16882680)

MERIDIAN

- As HTV West except:
- 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (1853951)
- 6.00pm Meridian Tonight (38)
- 6.30-7.00pm Grass Roots (90)
- 10.40pm Film: Conan the Destroyer (16882680)
- 5.00pm FreeScreen (90520)

ANGLA

- As HTV West except:
- 12.55-1.25pm A Country Practice (901199)
- 5.10pm Shortland Street (1853951)
- 6.25pm Anglia News (835425)
- 6.55-7.00pm What's On (74135)
- 10.40pm Film: Conan the Destroyer (16882680)
- 12.30pm In Bed with McDiarmid (5182742)

SATellite AND CABLE



Bill Hunter and Toni Collette (Movie Channel, 6.00pm)

- Good Life Guide (855330) 2.00pm Dumb and Dumber (281883) 3.00pm Downstairs, Upstairs (251514) 4.00pm The Doctor Series (787832) 4.30pm Success Through (835828) 5.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 6.00pm Families (835925) 6.30pm Classic Coronation Street (336721) 7.00pm The Doctor Series (5172358) 7.30pm New Dogs (282770) 8.25pm Mighty Ducks (1413574) 9.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 9.30pm Classic Coronation Street (336721) 10.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 10.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 11.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 11.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 12.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 12.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 1.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 1.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 2.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 2.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 3.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 3.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 4.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 4.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 5.00pm The Professionals (5171609) 5.30pm The Professionals (5171609) 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CRICKET 49

'Sullen' England brought to book in 134th Wisden

SPORT

THURSDAY APRIL 3 1997

BRYANT'S EYE 50

Marathon Man still running through the pain barrier



Leicester lock joins select band after being chosen to captain tour to South Africa

Johnson named as Lions' main man

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

MARTIN JOHNSON will lead the first professional British Isles rugby union party in South Africa this summer. Johnson, only the fourth Englishman to achieve this significant honour, was named yesterday ahead of five other players who have captained their countries and three more who failed to win selection.

It is a tribute to the Leicester lock, one of six players from his club named by the Lions, which equals the record established by London Welsh in 1971, although the Exiles added a seventh during their visit to New Zealand that year. The choice also reflects, however, the belief among the tour

management that the captain must be a man close to the heart of the action in what will be a physically demanding 13-match trip.

Frans Cotton, the tour manager, played under the leadership of another lock, Willie John McBride, for the unbeaten Lions of 1974 in South Africa and, curiously, all the other Englishmen to have led the Lions also had experience at lock. Ronnie Dove-Smith in 1924, Doug Prentice — like Johnson — a Leicester player — in 1930 and Bill Beaumont in 1980.

"It's a massive challenge for all the players and the management," Johnson, 27, said. "I hope we can develop a good

team spirit and the desire to win. There are guys in the squad who have captained their country and I'll rely on their advice and experience."

They are Iwan Evans, Rob Wainwright, Jason Leonard, Gregor Townsend and Keith Wood, an amalgam that should cover every permutation and offers a range of candidates for the important role of midweek captain. "This will be more physical than the five nations," Johnson said. He has mixed memories of South African opposition, since a punch from a Transvaal forward removed him from England's 1994 tour to the Republic. "Sides out there will try to physically intimidate us, in a fair way, and we have to be ready to stand up to that," he said, "but I don't think it will be a dirty tour, international rugby has changed in that respect."

The 35-strong party contains 18 Englishmen, eight from Wales, five Scots and four Irishmen, but includes two big surprises in Matthew Dawson, the Northampton scrum half, and Barry Williams, the Neath hooker, while there is one uncapped player, Will Greenwood. Ian McGeechan, the Lions coach, expects great things of Greenwood, the Leicester centre whose vision he admires, and of Eric Miller, the baby of the party at 21, who can play in all three back-row positions.

Dawson, overlooked by England this season, also spent three months sidelined by a knee ligament injury, though his qualities are clearly well known to McGeechan, the director of rugby at Northampton, who contribute five players to the tour. In this instance, McGeechan withdrew from the final decision to avoid accusations of bias, which will be made anyway.

Kyran Bracken, playing for Saracens, presented the strongest possible case for selection without appearing in the five nations' championship, but Dawson's talents fitted the playing template with which the Lions selectors have been armed all season. McGeechan did not want players of contrasting characteristics at scrum half, as was the case with Dewi Morris and Robert Jones in 1993, so Dawson finds himself accompanying Robert Howley and Austin Healey.

Williams, 23 and capped



Cotton, the tour manager, believes his 35-strong squad has a "good balance". It includes two unexpected names in Dawson and Williams

only once, against France last September, lies third in the Wales pecking order, behind Jonathan Humphreys and Garin Jenkins, and has been at odds with his club of late, but his handling ability and, specifically, his throwing-in skills at the lineout won him a place ahead of Phil Greening, though Greening might suggest that Keith Wood is not the most accurate of throwers.

Wood, like Scott Quinnell, sustains a family tradition since their respective fathers, Gordon and Derek, played for the 1959 and 1971 Lions. The Irishman, who has not played since dislocating a shoulder in

January, expects to be back in action for Harlequins in another week and the Lions management will be anxious to see him achieve full match fitness before the party leaves on May 17.

The same will apply to Neil Jenkins, the Pontypridd stand-off half picked to tour as a full back. Jenkins had a plate and eight screws inserted into a forearm last month after an injury against England. "It's improved a lot already after only a fortnight and I hope to get a game in beforehand," Jenkins said. Nor has McGeechan ruled him out of the No 10 jersey in South Africa.

ITINERARY

May: 24 v Eastern Province (Port Elizabeth); 28 v Border (East London); 31 v Western Province (Cape Town); June: 4 v Natal (Durban); 7 v Northern Transvaal (Pretoria); 11 v Gauteng Lions (Johannesburg); 14 v Natal (Durban); 17 v Emerging Springboks (Melbourn); 21 v South Africa (Cape Town); 24 v Free State (Bloemfontein); 28 v South Africa (Durban); July: 1 v Northern Free State (Welkom); 5 v South Africa (Johannesburg)

That is the weakest area of the side, McGeechan will fervently hope that Townsend's indifferent season with Scotland has been the result of trying too hard for a mediocre

team, while Paul Grayson, his Northampton colleague, must build upon the wider game that he has hinted at with England. "We have a good balance in the party, good enough up front to put a platform in place and good enough in the back row and three-quarters to play a game of pace and continuity," Cotton said. "We don't want a piece-meal team, we want to 'deconstruct' the game."

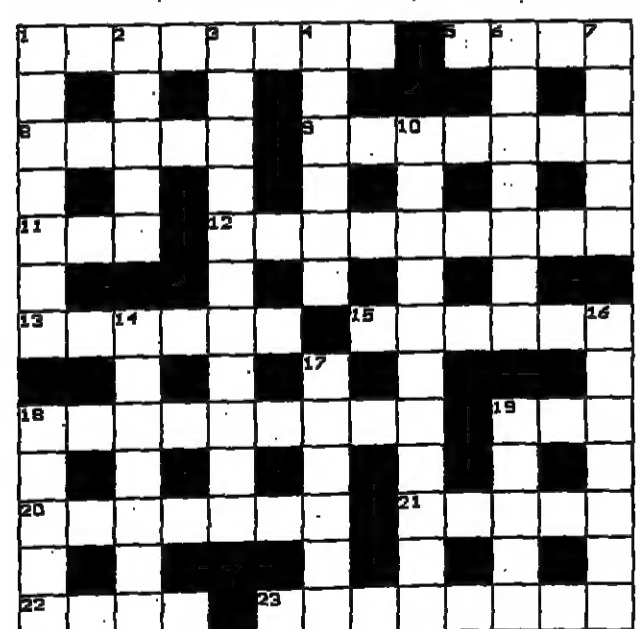
For all that, the Lions will be looking to their goalkickers. Jenkins and Grayson are acknowledged experts, but Dave Alred, the Bristol-based kicking coach, has been added to

the management team to improve the skills of Tim Stimpson, Townsend and Nick Beal so that the Lions will be fully armoured as the tour progresses.

They will assemble next weekend in Edinburgh for a two-day briefing and the following weekend the management will decide the list of replacements on stand-by. Since each of the home unions is on tour this summer, match-fit substitutes will be ready to hand for a tour of which Cotton said last night. "This is only the beginning. Now the players must make sure they win."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 1058 in association with BRITISH MIDLAND



- ACROSS
- 1 Daffodils (8)
 - 2 Capital of Norway (4)
 - 3 Filthy joke overbrightness (5)
 - 4 (Rocked) start to rise (4,3)
 - 5 Tiny — C. Carol cripple (3)
 - 6 Riddle (9)
 - 7 Join the forces (6)
 - 8 Arms of the sea (6)
 - 9 Health, vitality (4-5)
 - 10 Poor — Edgar's disguise (Lea) (3)
 - 11 Localised speech (7)
 - 12 Wall-painting (5)
 - 13 Get clean (4)
 - 14 Uneven (contest) (3-5)
- DOWN
- 1 Woman's bedwear (7)
 - 2 Kingdom (5)
 - 3 Not to be forgiven (11)
 - 4 Unspeaking (6)
 - 5 Whip; one harassing (7)
 - 6 Foreign-aid charity (5)
 - 7 Exciting activity (3,3,5)
 - 8 Burns' Scottish 20 (7)
 - 9 Tasted; took specimens (7)
 - 10 Pay attention (6)
 - 11 Victoria, the — at Windsor (Kipling) (5)
 - 12 Weary (5)

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Name/Address

SOLUTION TO NO 1057

ACROSS: 5 Astronauts 8 Pebble 9 Recess 10 Only 12 De facto 14 Tabular 15 Cove 17 Wither 18 Afghan 20 Self-portrait
DOWN: 1 Take for a ride 2 Stab 3 Gabriel 4 Starcuro 6 Over 7 Cost the earth 11 Laugh off 13 Warrior 16 Part 19 Goad

Apology may not save Gould's job

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

BOBBY GOULD'S future as the manager of Wales still hangs in the balance despite attempts by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) to settle the dispute between him and Nathan Blake, the Wales and Bolton Wanderers striker. Blake has accused Gould of making racist remarks and has said that he will not play for his country again while Gould remains in charge.

Brendan Batson, the deputy chief executive of the PFA, has spoken with player and manager and said yesterday that

ments to you or I can be OK but to your brother or friend they might not be."

However, opinion among the 26-strong body of councilors of the Football Association of Wales (FAW) appears to be divided. Gould's contract is due to expire in December and the 2-1 defeat against Belgium in Cardiff on Saturday, which effectively eliminated Wales from the World Cup finals, will not have enhanced his chances of an extension.

The Blake incident has possibly tipped the balance further. "I was shocked when I heard about all this," one FAW councillor, from the anti-Gould lobby, said yesterday. "If it is true, then it has to go against him. I don't like racism at all, I abhor it."

Alan Evans, the former chief executive of the FAW, also cast doubt over Gould's future. Writing in the *Western Mail*, which is based in Cardiff, Evans said yesterday: "I certainly don't believe Bobby is a racist but, in my experience, he is a bully where he thinks he has the upper hand, as often betrays a man who lacks true ability. That is a major weakness in dealing with players at the top level."

Gould has strenuously denied the charge of racism, and has said that he will again select Blake for Wales if he is playing well, but the issue is likely to be discussed at the FAW's next council meeting, on April 16. Ken Tucker, chairman of the FAW's senior international committee, said: "This has been blown up out of all proportion. It was a unanimous decision to appoint Bobby and I still think he's the right man for the job."



Gould: uncertain future

the issue had been resolved, if not forgotten. "Bobby, rang me, which is to his credit, and has made a full apology to Nathan," Batson said. "Nathan has acknowledged that and what happens next is now up to them."

"I'm sure there was no malice intended in Bobby's comments, but once he realised that it was perhaps insensitive, he did something about it. In an ideal world we shouldn't have remarks like this that can be misconstrued, but we're all different. Com-

Shearer in trim to make return

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

ALAN SHEARER, the Newcastle striker, should be available to captain England against Georgia when their World Cup qualifying campaign resumes at Wembley on April 30. Whether he will be fit to assist Newcastle's fading challenge in the FA Carling Premiership — they next play Sunderland at St James' Park on Saturday — will be determined by the club's medical staff today and tomorrow.

Shearer, scorer of 23 goals this season, has missed Newcastle's past six matches after undergoing a third operation to repair damaged groin tissue. He trained yesterday for the first time and emerged unscathed.

"Everything seems to be going well," he said. "I've been shooting, crossing, heading, turning and twisting. I've had no ill effects so far and I reckon I'm now ready to rejoin the first team. I'll obviously be taking advice from the club physios about possibly returning against Sunderland, but I would be extremely disappointed if I was not ready for the Georgia game."

After training, Shearer travelled to London to take part in the announcement that Braun UK Ltd, the electric razor manufacturer, is to become an official sponsor of the World Cup finals in France next year.

Shearer, who will spearhead the firm's campaign, appeared fresh and relaxed, not particularly surprising considering the undisclosed, yet inevitably substantial, slice that he will receive of the £10 million package.

Though coy about his finan-

cial remuneration, Shearer was happy to extol the virtues of playing for England in the four-team tournament in France in June, which also involves the host country, Italy and Brazil. Many Premiership managers have spoken out against it, even threatening to withdraw their players from the England squad, because they feel that it should be a rest period.

"If I'm fit, I'll be going, and I wouldn't expect a problem from my club," Shearer said. "I would think everyone wants to play in it. I'm sure the



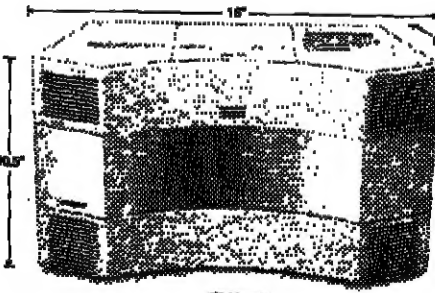
Shearer: back training

feeling I get playing for England is the same as other players and I don't see any reason why anyone should pull out, except through injury."

"The more football you play means that you're obviously being successful. That's what we're in football to be and I can't really see how you can moan about it. It would be nice to have a longer break but when you're 15 or 16 and just getting into the game, that's what you want to do — play for your country."

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